Sangam Classics : New Perspectives

A. PANDURANGAN

உலகத் தமிழாராய்ச்சி நிறுவனம்

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TAMIL STUDIES

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FOREWORD

It is an acknowledged fact that the Tamil society and culture are noted for their high antiquity. The historical, linguistic, archeological, literary, numismatics and other evidence corroborate beyond a shadow of doubt the high antiquity of the Tamil Society and its many-sided excellence.

The Tamil Sangam(Academy) which was patronized by the Pandyan Kings at Madurai has played a very significant role in the literary and cultural fields of Tamil nadu. The Sangam Literature besides throwing an appreciable flood of light on different branches of knowledge reflects each and every aspect of the Tamil Society. Every branch of knowledge in their pen portraits beauty of expression, clarity of thought, brevity in diction, intelligibility of theme, sublimity of idea nobility of purpose, velocity of appeal, catholicity of character and universality of outlook are the special characteristics of Sangam literature.

It is a pleasant moment that the International Institute of Tamil Studies publishes a worthy book entitled **Sangam Classics – New Perspectives**, which pursuits with different inner look through the new dimensional attitude by dealing with the role of Sangam classics.

As the author of the book told in his preface that this publication mainly consists of two aspects of Sangam Literature, one with religious thoughts and the other is about kingship of Sangam and social system encompasses with

the practical domains such as Education, Society, Cultural, Philosophy, Religious and so on.

Dr. A. Pandurangan who attributes himself as an ardent student of ancient Tamil Classics in his preface I concede his scholastic time being endeavor and I record my sincere appraisal that his current book serves well for all who thirst to look Sangam Classics critically.

I sincerely thank our **Hon'ble Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, Thiru. S.P. Shanmuganathan,** who is also the chairman of this Institute, for his able guidance on Tamil Studies and his kindness towards the Tamil Scholars.

I also thank **Thiru T.N. Ramanathan, I.A.S.,** Secretary to Government - Tamil Development, Religious Endowment & Information Department for his keen interest on the smooth functioning of the International Institute of Tamil Studies.

The staff of the Institute deserve thanks for their help in this effort. Thanks are due to United Bind Graphics who printed the text.

DIRECTOR

Note on Transliteration

Vernacular material relating to Tamil has been rendered in phonemic transcription in this monograph.

For example,

atu as adu

akam as aham

Pāṇṭiyan as Pāṇḍiyaṉ

ழ் > ḻ

ற் > ṟ

ள் > ḷ

ன் > ṉ

ABBREVIATIONS

AHAM	:	Ahanāṉūṟu
AKN	:	Aiṅkūṟunūṟu
DED	:	Dravidian Etymoligical Dictionary
KAL	:	Kaḷaviyal @ Iṟaiyaṉār Akapporuḷ Urai
KP	:	Kuṟiñcip-pāṭṭu
KT	:	Kalittogai
KUR	:	Kuṟuntogai
MK	:	Maduraik Kāñci
MP	:	Mullaip-pāṭṭu
MPK	:	Malaipaḍukaḍām
MN	:	Mundunūl
NAC	:	Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar
NAR	:	Naṟṟiṇai
NP	:	Nūṟpā
NV	:	Neḍunalvāḍai
PA	:	Porunarāṟṟup-paḍai
PAD	:	Padiṟṟup-pattu
PP	:	Pattup-pāṭṭu
PPA	:	Perumpāṇāṟṟup-paḍai
PAR	:	Paripāḍal
PAR.T	:	Paripādal Tiraṭṭu
PAT	:	Paṭṭiṉap-pālai
PN	:	Paḻamoḻi Nāṉūṟu
PURAM	:	Puṟaṉānūṟu
SN	:	Sēṉāvaraiyar
SP	:	Silappadhikāram
SPA	:	Siṟupāṇāṟṟup-paḍai
TK	:	Tirukkuṟaḷ
TMA	:	Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai
TOL	:	Tolkāppiyam
TOL.E.	:	Tolkāppiyam : Eḻuttatikāram
TOL.S.	:	Tolkāppiyam : Sollatikāram
TOL.P.	:	Tolkāppiyam : Poruḷatikāram

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I have great pleasure in acknowledging the Director for the CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN CIVILIZATIONS, New Delhi, for permitting me to publish my papers as a separate monograph, 'Saṅgam Classics : New Perspectives,' originally included in the publication entitled, the Life-World of the Tamils: Past and Present-I (Volume VI Part 5), 2008, brought out by the CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN CIVILIZATIONS, New Delhi.

I am deeply indebted to Professor R. Balasubramanian, my colleague in Pondicherry University, Pondicherry, leading exponent of the Advaitha philosophy, for his keen interest in my academic activities and guidance as a friend and philosopher.

It is a matter of great delight for me to record my gratitude to Dr. K.A. Gunasekaran, Director, International Institute of Tamil Studies (IITS), Chennai, my colleague in Pondicherry University, Pondicherry, for his profound interest in bringing out this monograph in connection with the deliberations of the World Classical Tamil Conference, held in June, 2010, at Coimbatore.

I express my gratitude to R. Indra Gandhi, Ramana Graphics for bringing out this monograph in a neat and beautiful manner.

A. PANDURANGAN

PREFACE

The two papers, Religious Thoughts of the Saṅgam Classics and the Saṅgam Classics on Kingship and Society were presented in the seminar on the Life - World of the Tamils: Past and Present. The revised papers were published by the Centre for Studies in Civilizations, New Delhi along with other scholarly papers in the Volume VI Part 5, The Life - World of the Tamils; Past and Present in 2008.

With the kind permission of the Centre for Studies in Civilizations, my papers are republished 'Saṅgam Classics: New Perspectives' as a monography titled.

The earliest collections of the ancient poems of the Tamils are known to the world as Saṅgam Classics / Saṅgam Literature. They are the bedrocks of Tamil language, Tamil literature and Tamil culture. From the date of their publications from palm leaf manuscripts, they are annotated para - phrased and well researched.

As an ardent student of ancient Tamil classics, I venture to re-interpret them in the historical and cultural contexts in this monograph. I submit this as a humble token of my gratitude to my teachers who moulded and shaped my academic career.

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1. RELIGIOUS THOUGHTS OF THE SAṄGAM CLASSICS

Tamil is one of the world's very ancient languages. It has been current for over two thousand years as a literary medium and also as a spoken tongue. The very early literary collections of this ancient language are known as "Saṅgam Literature". But the word "Saṅgam" is not found anywhere in the literature itself. The commentary on *Iṛaiyaṉār Ahapporuḷ* (a work on Tamil poetical theory) tells us that these collections are of lyrical verses composed by poets of Tamil Saṅgams (academies) conducted under the patronage of Pāṇḍiya kings. This commentary, orally transmitted, initially is stated to have been commmitted to writing in the eighth century A.D.[1] Its author, Nakkīrar, speaks of three Saṅgams established by Pāṇḍiyaṉ kings in their capital towns, their duration, their poet-participants, and their works. The works of Eṭṭut-tokai (Eight poetical collections) now extant and accepted as "Saṅgam works" by scholars are stated by the above-mentioned commentary to belong to the last of the three Saṅgams mentioned by it. [2]

Scholars have discussed at length the question of the historicity of the three Saṅgams mentioned in the commentary on *Iṛaiyaṉār Kaḷaviyal*.[3] Many of them have not accepted the legendary accounts of the Saṅgams in this work as historical truths. Still, some of these scholar-historians have conceded the broad truth that the Pāṇḍiya kings did establish an academy for the development of Tamil, basing their judgement on some statements in the works extant and the cumulative evidence of Tamil traditions.[4] It is, therefore, clear that the works now known as Saṅgarn works may be taken as the compositions of a large body of poets patronized by Pāṇḍiya kings in an academy. Besides the stories of the three Saṅgarns above mentioned, we have collateral historical evidence of accorded statements and facts on the conditions of the Saṅgam Age

and preceding it. Many writers in Sanskrit have expressed their impressions and views on the ancient Tamil country in several contexts. The accounts of sea-faring foreign traders having dealings with India agree in several details with facts mentioned in the Saṅgam poems. The archeological findings and the epigraphical transcriptions in the Tamil country carried out by many scholars also clearly attest to the antiquity and the advanced nature of the Tamil civilization.

The "Saṅgam Literature" consists of compilations of self-contained verses; they are collections of poetic efforts in different times by poets living in different places. There must have been a long time gap between the composition of the verses and their anthologization. According to the now available Saṅgam texts in printed editions, the total number of these verses of this literature is 2381; the names of 2279 composers of the verses are known; and the names of poets unknown to posterity are 102.[5] We treat the period of the composition of this outburst of verses as the Saṅgam Age or period. The historical fixation of this period has been debated by scholars having different views, and we are not in a position to give a definitive answer to this question.[6] Some scholars assign the Saṅgam Age to the first three centuries of the Christian era.[7] Scholars holding traditional Tamil views date the Saṅgam period from the fifth century B.C.[8]

There are references in the Saṅgam poems to the royal dynasty of the Nandas, their capital town, Paḍaliputra, and the Mauryas.[9] The Rock edicts of Aśoka mention the Tamil kings as allies of this emperor.[10] In the second century B.C. King Kharavela of the Kalinga country speaks in his Hathigumpha inscription of his victory over the alliance of the Tamil kings, who proved potential sources of danger to his land.[11] The wars between the Tamil kings and their northern counterpart-rulers are alluded to in the Saṅgam poems.[12] One of the Pāṇḍiya kings is given the appellation of having defeated the Āryan army.[13]

It may be inferred from these pieces of evidence that the beginning of the Saṅgam Age may be assigned to pre-Aśokan times, probably going back to pre-historic period, in which Tamil society must have risen from the stage of tribal groups to one of rule by kings. As the relics of a tribal society may be seen in some Saṅgam verses, we may take the beginning of the Saṅgam period as the fourth century B.C. The copper plates of the Pāṇḍiya kings tell us that the Saṅgam period ended with the coming of the Kaḷabhras and that they were deposed later by the Pāṇḍiya kings.[14] In view of these, we may assume that the Saṅgam period stretched from the fourth century B.C. to the third century A.D. and that the Saṅgam poetic literature evolved roughly over a time span of seven hundred years.

SOURCES FOR STUDY

Some scholars have taken the collection known as Padiṉeṇkīḻk-kaṇakku (Eighteen Minor Works) and the two long poems of Silappadhikāram and Maṇimēkalai as belonging to the Saṅgam period.[15] But recent researches have determined that only two anthologies of Eṭṭuttokai (Eight Poetical Collections) and Pattup-pāṭṭu (Ten poems) belong to the Saṅgam period.[16] Some scholars have further examined the Eight Poetical Collections in regard to their subject matter, handling of metres, poetic vocabulary, and historical background, and determined six of them as earlier and two others as later ones. The earlier ones, called "former Saṅgam" works, are Kuṟuntokai, Naṟṟṇiai, Ahanāṉūṟu, Puṟanāṉūṟu, Padiṟṟup-pattu, Aiṅkuṟu-nūṟu, and the later ones named "later Saṅgam" works are Kalittokai and Paripāḍal.[17] The Tolkāppiyam, an ancient grammatical work composed by a single author, ascribed to the second Saṅgam / academy by the commentary on Iṟaiyaṉār Kaḷaviyal[18] is also a source of our study and research here along with the other Saṅgam works.

It has been stated above that it is difficult to determine with exactness the beginning of the Saṅgam period and that many researchers have arrived at the first three centuries of the Christian era as the date of

provenance of these verses, basing their inferences on the evidence of the dates of the Tamil rulers and the Greco-Roman commercial relationships with the Tamil land. The extant Saṅgam collections offer a medley of pre-historic and historic happenings in a composite civilization. The contacts between the Tamil land and North India must have started before the Mauryan empire; and the Saṅgam literature displays in a mixed form the beliefs of the Vēdic religion with those of Jain and Buddhist faiths, which must have flowed into the south with the Mauryan contacts. The Tamil scholars have researched fairly elaborately on the religion and way of life, which prevailed in the days of the Saṅgam period. These have also appeared as separate publications.[19] It will be a worthwhile study to visualize these mixed up elements as separate influences.

This paper tries to separate pre-historic and historic beliefs of the Tamil people; and within the historical framework it attempts to isolate Vēdic and non-Vēdic elements.

2. ANCIENT WORSHIP PRACTICES OF THE TAMILS

We can isolate the native worship-practices of the Tamils from the later ones in the Saṅgam corpus of poetry. With the Iron age following the Neolithic age when civilization began, the Tamil society passed from the hunters' state to the agricultural one, cutting down forests to begin farming. Nomadic life gave place to a settled one, and tribal groups evolved leading to the rule of kings. A further development was the formation of bigger kingdoms with battles edging out tribal groups and smaller rulers. Some Saṅgam poems give evidence of this transitional period. The Tamil people of the very early period of tribal organization worshipped objects causing fear in them as in tribal societies all over the world. These deified objects were offered sacrifices under the belief that, if they were appeased, they would confer benefits on the worshippers. They believed in the existence of various spirits, male and female, called aṇaṅgu, sūr, sūrara-magaḷir, varaiyara-magaḷir, murugu, koṟṟavai, etc. whom they venerated by various practices.

Aṉaṅgu

The aṉaṅgu is a spirit-deity found only in indigenous Tamils' worship-practices as a fear-causing being. The word means "affliction" or "pain". When used as a verb, it means "causing pain".[20] The Tamil people believed that the aṉaṅgu dwelt on mountain slopes and in forests and water-sources, as a spirit-deity, causing fear and pain to men. It is also a general name for spirit-deities in several contexts of the Perumpāṇāṟṟup-paḍai,[21] Maduraik Kāñci,[22] and Ahanāṉūṟu.[23] This meaning is differentiated by the appellation tākkaṉaṅgu when the diety inflicts pain on the people.[24] A mother warns her unmarried daughter not to venture out of the house as the tākkaṉaṅgu is moving about.[25] Poets have spoken of the aṉaṅgu deity as residing in the stringed musical instrument (yāḻ), the beautiful breasts of women, and the weapons of war wielded by fighters.[26]

Sūr

Like aṉaṅgu, sūr is another afflicting spirit-deity, the name itself meaning fear. When this word is used as a verb, it gives the meaning "act cruelly".[27] The Kuṟiñcip-pāṭṭu says that sūr spirits, resident in the mountain pathways, afflict way-farers.[28] Poets also speak of the affliction visited on those who touch plants, or tree foliages. Even the mountain goats did not graze on such vegetation, fearing the wrath of the spirits.[29] The line referring to the chill northern wind (vāḍai), as like the affliction of the sūr, "implies that men shake with fear on contact with the spirit-deity".[30] The noun-phrase "sūrp-paṉippu", shaking with affliction by the sūr spirit, signifies the shudder caused by the sūr, like the attacking spirit, tākkaṉaṅgu, mentioned above.

Sūrara-magaḷir

Divine female spirits called sūrara-magaḷir and varaiyara-magaḷir were supposed to reside on mountains and mountain slopes. A lover-hero

speaks of his loved damsel as difficult to access like a sūrara-woman-spirit.[31] A lover swears his oath of fidelity to his heroine calling on sūrara-magaḷir as his witness.[32] The lover's oath called sūḷurai relates to his declaration to his loved one during his secret love (kaḷavu) period that he would formally marry her soon. The playmate of the loved one, the heroine, says that she suffers the affliction imposed by the sūrara-magaḷir as the lover fails to keep his sworn oath. The belief was thus current among the Tamil people that the sūr spirit-deity punished those who swore on its name for their transgressions.[33]

There was a belief that the sūrara-woman-spirits lived in flower-filled mountain springs; a lover speaks of his loved one as resembling the sūr female spirit resident in the divinity-marked kaviram hill slopes with flower-filled waterfalls and springs.[34] A verse in the Naṟṟiṇai mentions the dance of sūrara-magaḷir on mountain-slopes. The women spirits are said to dance to the tune of the sounding waterfalls, wearing blue-hued kuvaḷai flowers and blood-red seṅkāntaḷ flowers, beautifully stringed together in a garland.[35]

The Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai (the first poem in the Pattup-pāṭṭu) has given us a description of sūrara-women spirits singing the praises of Murugaṉ (the deity of the hill) and dancing on the mountain sides, which echo their sounds. These spirit-women with bamboo-like soft shoulders wear clothes with flower designs having the red hue of butterflies, and the trinkets on their reddish feet jingle. Around their waists runs a girdle strung with jewel pieces, which no artificial hand can ever fashion. Their ornaments are made of high quality Jāmbūnada variety of gold. Their divine lustre passes beyond even the heavens above.[36]

Varaiyara - magaḷir

Like sūrara-magaḷir, these are women divinities resident on hill-slopes and striking fear on people. The Kuṟiñcip-pāṭṭu[37] says that these women divinities dance on sky - touching mountain tops where cool seṅkāntaḷ

flowers in bloom lie on the slopes. In the poem, Malaipaḍu-kaḍām (of the Pattup-pāṭṭu), a professional dancer (kūttaṉ) directs another person of his class to be cautious of the varaiyara-magaḷir who dwell on the hill-slopes on their way.[38] They are like large petalled kuvaḷai flowers; and if the dancers see those flowers in bloom on their way, or if they happen to see the spirits' places of stay, they may shiver in a paroxysm of fear at the risk of their lives. Therefore without talking on the slopes, they are advised to go fast to the land pathways. The Tamil people believed that the strikingly beautiful varaiyara-magaḷir dwelt in mountain caves, invisible to men.[39] It is thus clear that they could be seen only scarcely.

Kollip-pāvai

The statue of a woman on the Kolli hill belonging to the Cēra kings believed to be divinely made is referred to in the Saṅgam poems in several contexts. Its beauty was thought to be unaffected by thunder, rain, wind, lightning or the sun, even when the earth quacked, and it was called māyā-iyaṟkaip-pāvai (the woman's statue of indestructible nature). Though it had great beauty, it frightened the evil doers only. It has been cited as a likeness of a typical heroine's beauty and an object inaccessible to the lover-hero by the Saṅgam poets.[40]

Mountain - divinities

The Tamil people believed generally that mountains and hills had divinities dwelling in them as seen from their descriptive expressions like "the lofty mountain with aṉaṅgu" (aṉaṅguḍai neḍuvarai), and so on.[41] These divinities were regarded as guarding deities of mountain areas as seen from references such as: "the hill-side with the aṉaṅgu with the guardianship of the divinity known for its valorous attacking strength.[42] We learn of the sacrifice of animals that the Tamils offered to these mountain divinities appeasing them in worship during times of drought or on occasions of excess rain causing harm to people.[43] A Naṟṟiṇai poem says that the people believed that the spirit-deity resident in the mountain had come out and that its anger would cool down with the rainfall.[44]

Another poem of the Ahanāṉūṟu says that the hill-men in their worship offered honey-dipped mango and jack fruits with forest wine matured in hollow-bamboo-sticks and then partook of the offered food served to them by women dressed in clothes of tree-foliage.[45] A third poem in the Kalittokai refers to an aṇaṅgu of a mountain receiving sacrificial offerings.[46] To please a mountain divinity, hill-men holding hands with women performed the kuravai dance. Wandering minstrels and dancers called pāṇar and kūttar going along mountain-ways to patron-chiefs to receive gifts are asked to sing the Kuṟiñcip-paṇ paying reverence to mountain-deities pleasing them. The dancers going to the chief Naṉṉaṉ, son of Naṉṉaṉ, on the Navira-hill are asked to sing in honour of the hill-deities and please them.[47]

Tree- Worship

Tree-worship is an ancient practice prevalent among all people of early civilizations pre dating worship of specific forms of gods. The Tamils believed that like mountain divinities, there were other divinities resident in forests, groves, river-ghats, open spaces (used for public purposes), trees, and pillar-posts called kandu. The forests have divinities, says the Padiṟṟup-pattu.[48] The minstrels going through forests first pay their obeisance to the deities resident there.[49] Divinity is said to be all around where devotees pray, in towns and villages, islands and groves, according to the Tirumurugāṟṟup-padai.[50]

We find many references to divinity's presence in roots of trees in the Saṅgam poetry,[51] and several verses[52] speak of divinity resident in varieties of trees like the āl (banyan), ōmai, kaḍamba, kaḷḷi, paṉai, marudam, vākai, vēṅgai, and vēmbu (margosa). Koṟṟavai (forest-deity giving victory in war) is said to reside at the foot of the vākai tree (whose flower is worn by victors in war).[53] Tree-deities are characterized as fear-causing just like sūr and the aṇaṅgu, says a Kuṟuntokai verse.[54] A verse in the Ahanāṉūṟu describes the warriors killing a fat cow they have

captured in an invasion and scattering its blood with food cooked out of its flesh as their bali, offering food to the deity dwelling under the margosa tree.[55] We have another description of offering food to the deity believed to reside in a banyan tree with long-spreading branches, and crows eating the food as they fly to their nests in the evening.[56] It was the custom of the Tamil people to suspend long garlands of flowers from branches of banyan and kaḍmba trees to please deities dwelling in them.[57]

Divinities in water-spreads

The Tamils believed in divinities as present in water-spread areas like the sea-river confluences, and ghats, islands, tanks, springs, and streams. These spirits visiting upon the people were generally invisible.[58] There are references to their presence in mountain-springs[59] and mid-river spaces and islands.[60] In a verse, the playmate of the heroine swears an oath in the name of the deity of the pool of water formed by the river-mouth meeting the sea.[61]

The sea, the final resort of all earth's water-flows, had its woman divinity for the Tamil people. There is no allusion to Varuṇa mentioned in the Tolkāppiyam as the god of the sea and its coast in the Saṅgam collections.[62] The Vēdic god, Varuṇa, is a male deity while the Saṅgam poems speak of a female deity in lines like: "the sea with the aṇaṅgu,"[63] "the aṇaṅgu residing in the spread of the huge sea,"[64] "the lady of the sea".[65] This female deity of the sea is depicted as wearing a head-wreath of jñāḷal flowers and a chest-garland of neydal flowers.[66] She is worshipped by people of the neydal or marine region.

A playmate of a heroine speaks of the latter's mother going with her friends to the cold sea-front and paying obeisance with folded hands to the chilly ghat with its aṇaṅgu.[67] We get a description of women of the marine region offering worship in the Koṟkai sea-front belonging to the Pāṇḍiya kings to the sea-deity by showering bright pearls and right-curved conches into the waters.[68] The Pāṇḍiya king, Palyāgasālai-

Mudukuḍumip-peruvaḻudi, got the name of the "tall one with the celebration of the festival of the sea-god" (munnīrviḻavin neḍiyōn) as a mark of his obeisance to the sea-god, conducting a festival in his honour[69] in the same way as the divinities of mountains and trees of water-sources were worshipped with sacrificial offerings.

A mother is stated to pray to the sea-god, offering toddy and head-wreath, and sacrificing a goat with erect horns and ears hanging low down.[70] In the poem, Paṭṭinap-pālai, we have a reference to the worship of the sea-god when fishermen of the marine coast find a diminution of their fish-catch; they plant the horn of a shark in the sands of the seashore and offer, with their kinsmen, their debt of obeisance to the sea-god.[71]

The divinity of the drums of kings

The Tamils believed in a fearful divinity resident in the royal drum, and honoured it with sacrificial offerings. The "three crowned heads" ruling the Tamil country had their drums, which occupied places of honour as important royal emblems. Drums, with terrifying thunder-like notes, were sounded by kings at the beginnings of wars and on occasions of victory. A day in the king's palace used to begin with the play of the drum signifying his valour; the drum was regarded as a divinity, and the platform on which it was kept was respectfully called murasuk-kaṭṭil (the throne of the drum). It was worshipped like other divinities with ceremony of bathing and beautifully decorated with rich peacock feathers and garlands; and also sacrificial blood-offerings were given in its worship.[72] There are several other references to the sacrificial blood-offerings to the drum in the Saṅgam poems.[73]

We have a fuller description of the worship of the drum in the Padiṟṟup-pattu. The priest in charge of the drum-divinity utters his mantras in loud tones of anger and offers it blood and toddy as sacrificial food. This food is left there, and the female spirits (pēy) tremble with their hands, unable to take it; even the ants do not go near it; crows and kites eat it.[74] The

platform forming the seat of the royal drum was held sacred; a soft bed was spread on the platform on which the drum rested. It used to be taken out of its seat on occasions of a bathing ceremony. Anybody happening to lie down on the bedspread on the drum's platform and thereby defiling the sanctity of the royal emblem would be punished by being cut into two by the king's sword. The poet, Mōsikīraṉār, who happened to commit this offence, sings that the king spared him from the extreme punishment, honouring his Tamil poetic gift.[75] This incident reveals the extent of sacredness attached to the royal drum besides royal favour to poets.

Worship of female statues and figures

We get references in the Saṅgam poetry to female statues and representations called pāvai. Varieties of pāvai known as maṉṟap-pāvai, teṟṟip-pāvai, allip-pāvai, and kollip-pāvai are mentioned in the worship and some play-activities of women. The Tamil traditional custom was to draw a representation of a respected or notable female figure and offer it obeisance. Such a pāvai figure is spoken of as a divinity accepting a sacrificial offering. A verse in Ahanāṉūṟu says that, in the same manner as the residence of a house grieved over the heroine gone away with the lover-hero, the pāvai figure, beautifully drawn on the wall, did not accept its usual *bali* offering sorrowing the absent heroine.[76] Poets have celebrated the beauty of women comparing them to *pāvai* figures.[77]

Divinity in common meeting places

The Tamil people found divinity invisible in various open spaces called *catukkam* (square), *sandhi* (junctions of streets), *podiyil* (common place), and *maṉṟam* (open meeting place). A stick cut-out of a tree was planted and invested with divinity under the name *kandu* and received worship in places of men's residence. The meeting spot of four streets was called *nāṟ-sandhi* or *catukkam*, that of two streets was *sandhi*. The meeting place in the midst of the village or settlement was a maṉṟam, generally under a tree. A common place (used for common purposes) was a *podiyil*, also called *ambalam*.

We infer from the Saṅgam poetry that the maṉṟam must have been an open space without any building in it. People of the area met in the open space under a tree for discussion along with their worship. A fear-striking deity was believed to be resident in the tree of the maṉṟam, as the Kuṟuntokai puts it.[78] New visitors to the village could stay in the maṉṟam, which is stated to be under an *itti* tree.[79] Under it children used to play.[80] In the marine neydal region, the foot of palmyra tree on the sea coast was taken as a maṉṟam, as seen in a reference to such a tree with old divinity attached to it as the place of a maṉṟam indicating also the worship of the deified foot of the palmyra tree by the people of the sea coast.[81]

While the maṉṟam was in the open land, the podiyil was a similar place of meeting with building structures, beautiful with its (wall) paintings.[82] When worshippers abandon their village in war-time, the deserted brick structure of the podiyil has its roof-beam coming down. The place of food-offering to the divinities becomes forlorn; the divinities of the painting on the walls also abandon their residences, as a poet sings.[83] This reminds us about the similar practice of the Devarāja cult in South-East Asian countries in which the deity worshipped by a defeated king would be removed from its place, and the worship would come to a close.

A verse in the Ahanāṉaūṟu speaks of a *kandu* pillar deified in a *podiyil* lying in ruin without worshippers, as deer rub their bodies on the kandu in the deserted podiyil.[84] Newcomers to a village could stay in the podiyil. Women captured in war would go to the podiyil after their morning bath, clean its platform dumping it with fresh cow-dung; in the evenings they would light up the inner temple room with lamps, and place garlands on the divinity inside. This description in the Paṭṭiṉap-pālai tells us of how women of the enemy's side captured in war were harnessed to do temple duties.[85]

Divinities resident in houses

The Tamil people paid their obeisance not only to divinity believed to

be present in forests, mountains, common areas, and open meeting places of men, but also to household gods believed to reside in homes of worshippers. There is reference to this in the Maduraik-Kāñci with the gloss on it by Naccinārkkiniyar.[86] Also, the Maduraik-Kāñci gives evidence about divinities resident in houses of rich people.[87] The entrances to the houses of the rich having divinities pertaining to them were revered by smearing door frames with aiyavi (a variety of white mustard) and anointing with oil, scaring away spirits from them.[88] In the evenings, women customarily lighted lamps and paid obeisance to the household deities scattering rice grains and flowers before them;[89] and this practice has survived today in many homes.

A Naṟṟiṇai verse says that women offered white rice as bali (food) to their household deity, and crows with their young ones would eat the leavings of this offering.[90] A verse in the Ahanāṉūṟu speaks of the playmate of a heroine with folding hands before the household deity, giving offerings in worship, and praying for the realization of early marriage for her heroine-friend.[91]

Pēy

The Maduraik-Kāñci speaks of pēys taking shapes and moving with kaḻudus at dead of night.[92] From this, we may infer that the pēys remain invisible during day time and that they assume shapes in nights to frighten those they come cross. In some Saṅgam poems there are references to the form of the pēy. A sulking heroine says that her lover-hero praises a parattai (public woman) as having beauty and form, which she herself lacks with the loss of her looks in child birth rendering her like a pēy. This implies the repulsive appearance of the pēy.[93] The pēys have heads looking cleft into two,[94] and their head-hair spread out like the expanded foliage of a tāḻai (screw-pine) tree.[95]

Sacrifices of living children before pēys in the ancient Tamil country seem to have taken place. In a verse of the Naṟṟiṇai, a simile mentions

the giving away of her infant as offering to a pēy by a chaste, faultless woman.[96] The Padrriup-pattu states that pēys do not kill those who fear and bow before them; they accept the bali offered by them and spare them.[97] We also mention here the story in the epic, Silappadhikāram, of a pēy in female form snatching away a dead child to eat it from the lap of a woman named Mālati praying for the dead child's resuscitation to life in the temple of Sāttan.[98]

There are many references to pēy-magaḷir also called pēyp-peṇḍir[99] in the Saṅgam works. Descriptions of battle fields in these poems tell us that the pēy women dig the warriors lying dead and drink the blood oozing out of their wounds. They stroke their hair with their blood-stained hands and dance on the field.[100] They embrace the corpses as they are left in the battle ground and devour the white flesh in them.[101] They roam about the field taking up the corpses falling in the fight.[102] They wear the flesh and the intestines of the dead warriors as garlands and dance raising weeping cries.[103]

K. Kailasapathy who researched into the accounts on pēy-magaḷir has come to the conclusion that there were women-magicians performing fertility rites in the ancient society.[104] Though the details about the pēy magaḷir given in the Saṅgam poems are scary and repulsive, we have to remember that these record facts of happenings in the Tamil society of an early age. There are accounts of victorious kings in the Saṅgam poems who performed kaḷa-vēḷvi, also called maṟak kaḷa-vēḷvi, feastting pēy on the field of battle with corpses to their satisfaction.

Koṟṟavai, pēys, and bhūtams

There are many Saṅgam verses, which mention Koṟṟavai,, the goddess of victory in association with pēys. The poet, Māmūlaṉār, sings of short and tall hill elevations present in the Pālai, waste land, comparing it to the crowding of short and tall kūḷis (varieties of pēys) when king Udiyaṉ Cēralādaṉ gave the offering of a feast to his ancestors.[105] The kūḷis

mentioned here are attendants in the retinue of Koṟṟavai, the goddess of the waste land. They are said to serve her and live earning her grace. They also present riddles and pieces of witty humour to entertain her; and this is clear from two references to such entertainment in the Perumpāṇāṟṟup-paḍai[106] and the Kalittokai.[107] We infer from another Kalittokai[108] verse of the distinctions of gender among pēys, unlike sūr and aṇaṅgu described as female pēys; pēys have varieties of kūḷis and kaḻudus as well. Women pēys are said to ride on kaḻudus;[109] the latter too move about, like the former, in midnights unfrequented by men.[110]

In battle fields, scary bhūtams (goblins) also roam about with pēys and kūḷis; corpses are piled up like mountains on the battle field areas; these are pulled out by the pēy woman as foxes, and kaḻudu pēys move about in the place which is guarded by the bhūtams.[111] Bhūtams are short and large-sized compared to pēys; those dancing the tuṇaṅgai look as if they are wearing a white dress.[112] They stay in cremation grounds as well as on trees. A poet mentions a vēṅkai tree with a bhūtam staying on it "in the village of Kāmūr belonging to a patron chief named Kaḻuvuḷ"[113] The Paṭṭiṉap-pālai speaks of bhūtams guarding the temple of Kaḷi.[114]

3. NAḌUKAL (HERO-STONE)

The Saṅgam anthologies evidence the practice of honouring heroes, sacrificing themselves with mortal wounds of valorous fighting in the battle field, with stones commemorating them and paying obeisance to them. This practice of honouring the dead hero with memorial stone had an important place among worship-observances of the Tamils. It has to be assumed as an old tradition, which grew with the passage of time and received the tribute of poets in the Saṅgam age.

Seizure of cows and memorial hero-stones

We have many verses on memorial hero-stones connected with warriors who displayed conspicuous bravery in the veṭci fight of seizing the enemy's herds of cows (as the first token of an attack), and in the

karantai fight of defending one's side from enemy attacks on herds of cows. The Ahanāṉūṟu[115] in two contexts[116] and the Puṟanāṉuṟu[117] in one, speak of the great valour of warriors of established fame who attacked enemy herds of cows, or defended them against such attacks from the enemy's side, and earned lasting honour worthy of naḍukals for them.

Near the hero-stones, the lances and shields used by the dead heroes used to be planted as memorial tributes.[118] The custom was also prevalent of recording on the herostone the names of the valorous warriors who had displayed uncommon bravery regardless of their lives and the particulars of their memorable exploits.[119] As poets have sung of these stones as looking like actual human figures during nights,[120] they were perhaps fixed to a man's height; they were obviously established on ways frequented by people and drawing their attention. The hero-stones had a divinity about them in the estimation of the Tamils as is clear from the expression "naḍukal causing reverential fear".[121] The stones were worshipped and offered bali.[122]

We can understand from the Saṅgam poems the extent of involvement of the Tamils in their obeisance to hero-stones. They bathed the stones with holy water; smeared them with turmeric, and offered flowers of various kinds. A covering cloth was spread as a roofed pavilion over the hero-stone. Peacock feathers were also used to decorate the memorial which had the shield, and the lance of the dead hero placed leaning on it as mementos. Fragrant incense was burnt, and the drum sounded as obeisance was done. Varieties of selected liquor and toddy were placed as food-offerings to the divinities of the stones; the blood of a slaughtaed goat was also offered as bali.[123]

An elegiac verse in the Puṟanāṉuṟu composed by the poetess, Auvaiyār, celebrates the hero-stone established for the king, Adiyamāṉ Neḍumāṉ Añji, and the obeisance paid to it. The poetess laments touchingly as she says: "Will he, who did not accept the kingdom with lofty peaks in his life, accept (after death) the offerings of rice scattered over the memorial hero-stones?"[124]

Tolkāppiyam on Naḍukal

The Tolkāppiyam (the ancient grammatical classic of the Saṅgam age) speaks of naḍukal worship as poetic subject matter, and the stages of its presentations.[125] Its aphoristic statement is explained by the expositor, Iḷampūraṉar, as comprising five stages-kāṭci, finding the suitable stone for the memorial of the famous hero; kālkōḷ, the bringing of the selected stone to the spot of fixation of the stone; nīrppaḍai, bathing the stone in holy water; naḍukal, planting or establishing the stone in the spot meant for it; perumpaḍai, building a shrine for the stone; vāḻttu, divinizing the stone and worshipping it with praises.[126] It is probable that the worship of the hero-stone is a survival of ancestor-worship; old societies believed that the excellences of ancestors are passed on to their worshippers. The Tamils seem to have acted on the belief that the hero-stone had in it the dead person's soul.

We also learn from the Puṟanāṉūṟu that naḍukals were established in honour of people who fasted unto death as a self-sacrifice for one reason or other. King Kōpperuñ Coḻaṉ gave up his life, fasting in a sitting position facing north till he died, as his sense of disgrace at the revolt of his sons against him led him to this extreme step. A memorial hero-stone was put up at the place of his self-immolation, and the Puṟanāṉūṟu verses tell us of the happenings centring on his naḍukal.[127]

The bravery of heroes was celebrated not only with memorial stones recording their glories and honoured with worship, but also with the pictorial representation of the heroes and the inscription of their exploits on naḍukal rock-faces receiving such worship; and this is evidenced by a Saṅgam poetic reference[128] to the "big stone (or rock) naturally formed on earth, looking like the one fixed firmly on the ground". Obviously, the bits of rocks growing tall in mountainous areas were taken as naḍukal and worshipped by the Tamils. Also, the places of burial of the warriors who met brave deaths in cattle-raiding attacks received worship; over earth-mounds on burial places, covering-stones were laid, and a verse of the

Ahanāṉūṟū tells us that these stones were regarded as naḍukals and received worship.[129]

The reverential treatment accorded to the memorial stone in the naḍukals shows that the Tamil society takes us back to very early ages. It may have started with the practice of planting the stones over burials of warriors killed in cattle raids in the new Stone Age and grown to divinizing natural rock-stones. During the Iron Age, the habit of resting the dead hero's war weapons on his memorial stone may have begun. With the age of literacy, the inscription of the details of the hero's exploit and the representation of his figure on the stone may have started. The existing Saṅgam poetry collections do not exhibit these likely stages. The details in poems on hero-stones found in them seem to reflect "vestiges of a tribal society, evolving into monarchies", and one may suspect that some of them are much older than their date of collection.

4. Worship of Murugaṉ

Murugaṉ-worship occupies a place of notable esteem among the Tamil religious cults. Its antiquity is evidenced by the relics found in excavations at Ādicchanallūr in Tirunelveli area assigned to the Chalcolithic Age, when implements of stone and iron had come into use. The burial-urns at this site yielded golden mouth-covering pieces (resembling those which modern kāvaḍi bearers carry in Murugaṉ-worship) and iron triśūlas (lances with three heads); and the triśūlas have the emblems of cocks (the insignia of Murugaṉ).[130] These findings enable us to posit the worship of Murugaṉ as obtaining even in the old stone age of the primitive hunting society.

At the beginning stage of the Murugaṉ-cult, only the vēl (lance), the weapon of the deity, seems to have received obeisance. The tribal priest of the cult was known as Vēlaṉ, so-called as he danced, carrying the vēl, an instrument of the age of metals succeeding the Stone Age. The concept of a deity with an iron implement must have shaped itself in the civilization

of the Tamils reflecting the age of metals. With the growth of the Murugaṉ-cult, Vaḷḷi was made his consort, and he emerged as a unique deity of the Tamil people.

In historical times when the Āryan cultural features merged with those of the Tamils, the Purāṇic legends about North Indian deities like Skanda, Kumāra, Kārtikēya, and Subrahmaṇya were absorbed in the Tamil tradition of Murugaṉ; and Dēvasēṉai, daughter of Indra, was made his first wife, and the pre-existing first wife, Vaḷḷi, got edged to the second place. Murugaṉ who was considered the son of the female deity called Koṟṟavai in the hunting stage of the Tamil society underwent a change as the son of the male deity, Śiva, in the new dispensation. We will be able to look at the original Murugaṉ if we isolate later cultural conceptual assimilations.

The base of the word "Murugaṉ" is "murugu" with several meanings: beauty, youth, deity, fragrance, sacrifice.[131] "Murugu" is an adjectival base often used for the deity "Murugaṉ" in the Saṅgam anthologies,[132] which also have the word Murugaṉ, formed from "Murugu + -aṉ" (masculine denoting suffix).[133] The poems depict him as the deity of a society of hunters. When they describe a lover-hero of the Kuṟiñci (mountainous) region, they liken him to Murugaṉ. He comes with hunting dogs by his side, and he silences their barks with leash as he talks to the heroine's party keeping watch on the grain fields.[134] Descriptions of the princely hero-lover recall to us the figure of Murugaṉ, the embodiment of the eternal flower of youth.

We find Murugaṉ depicted in the Saṅgam poems as a divinity imposing afflictions on unmarried girls as he possesses them in the same way as aṇaṅgu and sūr. The sooth-saying woman attributes the heroine-girl's love-sickness to Murugaṉ afflicting her in the Ahanāṉūṟu[135] and the Naṟṟṇai,[136] and there are references to his affliction in general terms in the Kuṟiñcip-pāṭṭu[137] and the Puṟanāṉūṟu.[138]

Murugan worship

The appeasing worship of the deity, Murugan, believed to afflict woman, was called variously as veriyayardal, veriyāḍal, and veriyāṭṭu. The old Tamil word "veri" means "fragrance or scent" as used in expressions like "veri malar" (fragrant flower), veri-kamal polil (garden with prevailing fragrance) in the Saṅgam poetry. As the residents of the mountainous areas offered Murugan incense and flower on their worships, the places retained the scents left behind and came to be called verik-kaḷam (places of fragrance) and also as veri-manai.[139] The worship itself was identified with veri[140] as seen from the Paripāḍal.

The leading priest of this worship was Vēlan who used to sing and dance in honour of the god carrying vēl in his hands. There is a reference in the Tolkāppiyam to the Vēlan of fierce lips with the excellence of expertness in veri testifying to the priest's competence and experience in Murugan-propitiation.[141] This priest is also called in later periods as paḍimattān and dēvarāḷan. When maids in the bloom of youth fall sick and her parents find treatment, with medicines and other usual remedies ineffective, they attribute her affliction to Murugan and seek the help of the kaṭṭuvicci (the woman diviner of possession), called also akavan-magaḷ (the woman-caller of the divine).[142]

The Vēlan is the male magician and the medicine-man, the counterpart of the female Kaṭṭuvicci of the ancient society. It appears from a reference in the Narrnai[143] that the Vēlan too used kalaṅgu pieces for his sooth saying. The parents of an afflicted girl used to arrange for a veriyāḍal (dance-worship) seeking a cure for her affliction. The Vēlan by his frenzied invocations would bring the Murugan's-divinity on the verikkaḷam (place of veri observance); this is referred to as Murugu ārruppaḍutta (getting Murugan to the scene) in the Saṅgam verses[144] and glossed as such by the old commentator, Naccinārkkiniyar. The "possessed" Vēlan would dance singing the praises of Murugan; at the end of his acts of "possession", he would give out his predictions, and prescriptions and

the flowers offered in worship would be given to the affected maid.[145] The parents would present the emaciated and pale girl at the site of the veṟiyādal because of their belief in the curative effect of such propitiatory dance-worship.

The procedures of veri-worship

The place of the veṟi was the courtyard of the house of the afflicted girl, which would be paved with fresh sand.[146] Murugaṉ' s banner with the cock ensign would be hoisted there.[147] The place of the veṟi would be decorated well, and flower-garlands would beautify it. The Vēlaṉ would be wearing green-leafed garlands, red dress with a "waist-band" round his waist.[148] Poets have also sung of his wearing a garland of kaḍamba flowers.[149] The Vēlaṉ, as priest of Murugaṉ, would spread fragrant incense and sing loudly the praises of his worshipped divinity and thus invoke the god's presence on the dance-ground.[150]

A male goat would be tied to a post on the dance area and the Vēlaṉ would cut it and then mix its blood with red corm-grain and scatter it as offering to the Murugaṉ's divinity. He also offers different varieties of cooked food items along with flowers as well. With many musical instruments relevant to Murugaṉ worship sounding, the Vēlaṉ would sing benedictory praises of the god. In that tense moment, he would be possessed by Murugaṉ, pass his hand over the forehead of the afflicted girl, and give her the flowers offered to the deity.[151] The expression "naṟu-nudal nīvi" (passing the hand over the fragrant forehead) in the Kuṟuntokai has to be taken to mean that the Vēlaṉ smeared the blood of the sacrificed lamb on the girl's forehead as a tilaka (mark of holiness).[152] These details show up the Vēlaṉ as the magician and the healer of disease in the set-up of the very early society.

Murugaṉ worship by women

We hear of priestesses of Murugaṉ in addition to the priests in the Saṅgam collections. The Tirumurugaṟṟup-paḍai speaks of hill-women

invoking the god on the mountain of fruited groves.[153] The ritual, which one goes through, is a frightening one. The flag of Murugan with the cock emblem is hoisted at the place of the veṟi which the priestess smears with ghee and white mustard called aiyavi. She wears on her waist two clothes of different hues; she has red thread as a "protective" string tied on her hand; the male goat is slaughhtered, and its blood mixed with white rice and put in cane baskets spread out as offerings to the god. Saffron and sandal moistened with water are sprayed over the place of the veṟi decorated with garlands of red alari and other flowers cut to uniform size. She burns incense raising a fragrant smell, scatters flowers as offerings, utters in subdued tones the mantras sacred to Murugan, and performs the gestures of the hand usual in his worship.

Those who deny the divinity's existence get frightened as she invokes the presence of Murugan on the scene of the veṟi worship. This description of the ritual of the Murugan-deity in invocation is a poetic recordation of a very ancient observance of the Tamil people. The Aiṅkuṟu-nūṟu[154] has the expression "kannam tūkki" which means that the priest raised the image of Murugan to diminish the affliction of the girl, according to the interpretation of the old commentator of the work. Avvai Duraisami Pillai, a modern scholar, says that it is a plate with the holy mantras of Murugan written on it, i.e. a talisman.

The worship of Murugan, special to the mountain region of which he was a preferred deity, spread to other regions of the Tamil land also. In these areas, we find that group of men and women dance jointly holding their hands together, with musical instruments sounding as they sang the praises of Murugan without the veṟi ritual. This dance is called kuravaik-kūttu. Poets speak of Murugan himself as dancing the kuravai, having his hands locked with those of the women devotees.[155]

Veṟiyāḍal: a ritual observance

The veṟi worship is shown in the Saṅgam anthologies as an

observance resorted to by the parents of the girl regarding her as afflicted by the god Murugaṉ. They are not aware of the love sickness of the girl caused by her secret wedding to a hero-lover and her body becoming thinner as she suffers in love sickness with paleness and anxiety; the nurse and mother call in the Kaṭṭuvicci, and Vēlaṉ priestess and priest respectively, to divine the cause of the illness as affliction by the divinity, Murugaṉ, using their devices of grain arrangements. According to their prescription of the veṟi to propitiate Murugaṉ, the mothers conduct this observance. There is a separate section on veṟi called veṟip-pattu in the Aiṅkuṟu-nūṟu.[156]

The misconception of the parents is rejected by the love-sick heroine, and the lover-hero on secret visits to his loved girl. The friend or the girl herself seeks to resolve the matter by revealing the truth to the parents and preventing the veṟi observance. The veṟip-pattu (ten verses) in the Ainkuṟu-nūṟu is in the situation of the revelation of the truth of the girls's secret love by the friend (tōḻi) with the cevili (foster-mother) standing in the background within hearing distance.

The friend asks rhetorically: "Does the Vēlaṉ (who is now the officiating priest) know of the wedded love between the girl-heroine and her lover-hero?" Similarly, the friend of the girl-heroine mocks at the veṟi of the Vēlaṉ in the Naṟṟiṇai[157] as she says: "This may be a divinity propitiation, but it is foolish, oh! Murugu, I wish you well." We get verses in the Ainkuṟu-nūṟu also scoffing at the ignorance of the Vēlaṉ engaging in the veṟi without knowledge of the real cause of the girl's sickness.

From these statements of mockery of the Veṟi observance, it appears to be a survival of a ritual of the earlier primitive conditions of society. By the time of the later work of the Paripāḍal,[158] we may infer the downgrading of the veṟi observance in the society's estimation; it is called "pē viḻavu"(devilish celebration).

Temples of Murugaṉ

In the tribal social organization pre dating the emergence of monarchies, villages ruled over by tribal chiefs were called siṟūr (small villages). The Puṟanāṉuṟu tells us of temples to Murugaṉ in such villages.[159] It says those women keeping aloof from cooking vessels in the state of pollution of their monthly periods avoided going to the places of the Murugaṉ-divinity.[160] The Naṟṟiṇai has a reference to Vaḷḷi as Murugaṉ's wife.[161] It is inferred from this verse that Murugaṉ wedded Vaḷḷi in secret (kaḷavu) as this is cited as an example by the hero-lover persuading his loved girl to wed him in secret.[162] The old Tamil society considered Vaḷḷi only as the wedded love of the divinity, Murugaṉ. It is interesting to note that Silappadhikāram mentions Vaḷḷi alone as the consort of Murugaṉ.

The excelling valour and might of Murugaṉ

Murugaṉ's valour in battle had been held up as an example in an Ahanāṉūṟu verse extolling the bravery in fighting of a chief.[163] In a reference in the Puṟanāṉuṟu, Murugaṉ is praised as one who knew no defeat and who accomplished whatever he wished to do.[164] Murugaṉ was always successful in the battle field;[165] his all-powerful indignation is esteemed proverbial;[166] and his weapons have been praised.[167] The poet Kapilar sings that he stands undaunted before enemy warriors rattling their hero's bracelets and faces them straight.[168]

On account of Murugaṉ's fair, reddish complexion, he is called Sēyōṉ.[169] The Tolkāppiyam calls him Sēyōṉ as pointed out earlier. He wears garlands of kaḍamba flowers string with green leaves; he is the conqueror of Sūr, the demon. We can infer from the references collected above that the Murugaṉ's divinity of the society of the hunting stage evolved into a god of victory associated with kings when monarchies came into being. Murugaṉ is variously known in the Saṅgam literature as Kaḍambaṉ, Sēyōṉ, Neduvēḷ, and so on.[170]

5. KOṞṞAVAI

Koṟṟavai, one of the very old female divinities worshipped by the Tamils, finds no mention in the Tolkāppiyam's listing of the deities of the regions of the Tamil country. Later tradition has given her the place of the deity of the Pālai (waste land) area; she was revered as their "clan-deity" by hunters in forest areas. She is called the "high-famed" goddess of the jungle in the Saṅgam literature.[171]

Her temple was located in forest areas, and it was called the courtyard with the fear generating divinity. Spirits and goblins guarded her temple, and they entertained her with the narration of riddles and stories, as stated earlier. As Koṟṟavai was the deified giver of victory in war, she was called Koṟṟavai of victorious fighting,[172] and as the victorious wielder of the sūlam (lance) on the hand.[173] Her praise as the wielder of the lance does not accord with her status as the deity of forest-dwelling hunters and has to be considered as a later addition to her image. The lance weapon is an attribute of Durgā, a deity who has not been considered the goddess of victory in Sanskrit sources, but as "Mahiṣāura-mardani" (the one who put down the demon named Mahiṣā).

The existing Saṅgam verse anthologies must have been composed in different periods, and George Hart conjectures that the practice of making Koṟṟavai as Sūli and Selvi must have arisen in times of the fusion of Tamil and Āryan cultures.[174] The Silappadhikāram, belonging to this later period, describes Koṟṟavai as possessing the sword in addition to the lance as her weapons.[175] The antiquity of this is attested by the expression "paḷaiyōḷ" (the ancient damsel) found in the Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai.[176] This goddess of victory is appropriately assigned her residence under the tree of flowers considered as victory-symbol (vākai).

The Padiṟṟup-pattu has a reference to this effect. It also says that the Cēra warriors used to wear vākai flowers in addition to the palmyra flowers considered as the insignia of their kings.[177] While bali offerings were made

in the worship of Koṟṟavai, the people of the Pālai region used to wear a ritualistically protective thread (kāppu nūl) on their hands, just as they did in Murugaṉ worship. A girl-heroine comments: "What is the use of wearing the protective thread and praying to the Sūli, goddess of victory, if the lover-hero, gone for some work to another land, forgets his love and stays put there itself?"[178] Similarly, in the Neḍunal-vāḍai the foster-mothers of the heroine pray to Koṟṟavai for the early return of the hero finishing his exploit, as the heroine herself has "the protective thread on her hands".[179]

Koṟṟavai worship in the Cēra land

From the Padiṟṟup-pattu, we learn of the prominent place given to Koṟṟavai worship in the Cēra region. This region, being a mountainous area, seems to have had a society whose members lived by hunting in early times. The goddess Koṟṟavai, enshrined in the Ayirai mountain of the Cēra land, was the tutelary deity of the kings of that land. They used to pay their obeisance to this deity before they entered into wars.[180] This goddess was worshipped with bali offerings of blood as her preferred food, and the Padiṟṟup-pattu says that she will not accept other offerings by her devotees.[181] We also learn that the Cēra king used to offer this deity a lot of blood-mixed rice-balls in his worship of her.[182]

We may say that Koṟṟavai, an ancient divinity of the Tamils of very early ages, attached to the Pālai region and its hunter's fond of fighting, was the deity conferring victory on her worshippers during the period of transition from a tribal organization to that of the overlordship of chieftaincies. When the smaller chieftains gave place to monarchies, Koṟṟavai became the tutelary deity of the ruling kings. Later day Cōḻa kings continued this tradition as they worshipped the Durgā goddess as their tutelary deity, as seen in the temple at Paṭṭīsvaram (near Kumbakōṇam).

Kūṟṟuvaṉ (Deity of Death)

Kūṟṟuvaṉ is one of the ancient divinities of the Tamils, so called as he

separates the body from the soul; he is also called in the Saṅgam poems as Kūṟṟu, Kūṟṟam, and Kālaṉ.[183] His weapon is stated to be kaṉicci (an axe). This is contrastable with the noose (pāsam) assigned as weapon to the God of Death in Sanskrit works, and the difference makes it clear that Kūṟṟuvaṉ or Kālaṉ is an indigenous god of the Tamils, who believed firmly that his dispensation was unchangeable.[184]

As compared with references to Murugaṉ, those about Kūṟṟuvaṉ are less in number. Some of these compare the invincible might of kings to the unfailing kill of the Kūṟṟuvaṉ; some sing attributing blame to the God of Death taking away the lives of kings achieving great victories in war.[185] A poet asks rhetorically whether the unjust God of Death, who takes toll of lives without any reason, has chosen to covet the life of this monarch too.[186] Another poet cries out: "Oh! Death, you have killed this king who is left on earth to feed you with dead bodies (as he killed his opponents in battle) and satisfy your hunger? Like a farmer, eating away his capital of seeds meant for sowing, you have devoured this King."[187] George Hart thinks that poets speaking of kings in terms of Kūṟṟuvaṉ, the Death-god, suggest their invincibility in war as well as the sacredness attached to them. [188]

Summing up

So far we have set forth the ways of responding to divinities and the practices of worship indigenous to the Tamil people prevalent in the most ancient past before their contact with the Āryans from the North. It is clear that the Tamils were living a native way of life which they had fashioned. From the Saṅgam poems we infer that their way of life was turned mostly to secular things and that they had little concern with the issues of another world as they were much involved in matters of love and war of this life. The divinities appearing in the ancient literature are mostly vengeful, fear-striking ones. To please them and earn happiness in their lives, the people resorted to ritual observance like the Veṟi, and the hilly-maids, Kuṟamagaḷ, who conduct the ritual observances, are said to utter their mantras; and it

appears that they made appropriate mudras (prescribed gestures) as they uttered their mantras.

This is suggested by lines 228-29 of the Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai mentioning details of the procedure followed by the priest engaged in the ritual. "Kaṉṉam" figuring in this observance has earlier been pointed out as likely to the thin metal plate inscribed with the bīja-mantras (esoteric chants) of the divinity. The smearing of the blood of the young goat, sacrificially offered to the god, on the forehead of the affected girl is a ritual of calming down the ailment (sānti observance). The Vēlaṉ's words of soothsaying in his possessed state are not taken seriously by the heroine, or her friend, or the hero; and they treat it as a superfluous ritual. The details given about the pēy woman are associatable with women magicians who conducted fertility rites in very early societies, as pointed out earlier.

Summarizing the position, we may say that as a whole the conceptualization of divinity by the old Tamils did not go beyond sense perceptions of this world. In old Tamil, there are words for divinity-iyavuḷ iṟai, iṟaivaṉ, kaḍavuḷ, and deyvam. The Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai calls Murugaṉ as the leader-god whose great name is praised by great people.[189] The expositor, Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, glosses iyavuḷ as talaivaṉ (leader or chief) and adds another explanatory word saying "also kaḍavuḷ" (god).[190] Iyavuḷ has the root meaning, "iyaṅgudal" (moving or conducting). The two words, iṟai, iṟaivaṉ, mean king also. If we take deyvam as a Tamil formation from a Sanskrit word, we are left only with kaḍavuḷ, and is taken to mean as an object surpassing (kaḍa) and the mind (uḷ).[191] George Hart offers his original derivation of this word basing it on kaṭaṉ (in the Kuṟuntokai, 218) meaning debt of bali offering with uḷ as a derivative suffix. He takes kaḍavuḷ to mean "the one who receives bali offering," as a result of the word-changes.[192]

(i) Word: kaḍa + uḷ

(ii) Kaṭaṉ base, alternates with kaṭam (final ṉ and m being interchangeable)

(iii) Kaḍam + uḷ → kaḍa + uḷ (loss of - m)

(iv) Kaḍa-v-uḷ → kaḍavuḷ (insertion of -v-in sandhi)

This explanation deserves further examination.

6. THE IMPACT OF VĒDIC RELIGION

The belief and practices of the Vēdic religion slowly spread in the ancient Tamil land as it came into contact with influences flowing from North India. The Brāhmī-inscriptions in the Tamil country ascribed to the second century B.C. contain some Prakrit words. The Tamil kings enthusiastically accepted the Vēdic faith, and the Vēdic studies got spread over the whole Tamil land. The Brāhmaṇas, well-versed in the Vēdas, settled in various centres; and the Itihāsas and the Purāṇas with their legends, and also the Dharma-śāstras, became part of the Tamil ambience. The Tamil culture and the Āryan culture met, and a fusion of cultures evolved. The Varṇāśrama set-up gained currency in the Tamil society, and evolutionary synthesization processes were pronounced in the sphere of religion. Old Tamil divinities assumed new formulations in the cultural fusion; and hierarchical distinctions based on birth came to prevail.

Murugaṉ in the Vēdic Ambience

The old Tamil grammar, Tolkāppiyam, mentions Murugaṉ as the deity of the mountainous (Kuṟiñci) region.[193] He is variously known in the Saṅgam poems by the names, Murugaṉ, Sēyōṉ, Sevvēḷ, Selvaṉ, Sēy, Neḍuvēḷ, and Vēḷ. He is celebrated as Kuṟiñcik-kiḻavaṉ[194] (the one belonging to the mountainous areas). Though the Kuṟiñci region is special to Murugaṉ, the Saṅgam poems give evidence of his worship in all other regions as well of the Tamil country.

The Paripāḍal describes the birth of the god Murugaṉ according to the

Purāṇic legends of Sanskrit. Lord Śiva, at the request of Indra, severed into bits the foetus arising from his enjoyment with his consort, Umā; this fragmented foetus was received by seven divine sages and was cast into the fire of sacrifice along with oblations. The homakuṇḍa (acrificial fire-pit) thus provided the sacrificial food which six Kārttikai damsels, wives of six sages (out of seven, leaving out Arundhati, wife of one sage) partook; they conceived as a result of the intake of the havis and delivered six children in the sacred pond, Saravaṇap poygai. Indra, on account of his enmity with Murugaṉ, attacked the six children born at the sacred pond with his Vajra weapon on the very day of their birth. As a result, the six children fused into one form of Murugaṉ, and the Vajra weapon got destroyed by the bare hands of the child. Indra then decided that only this young one of super abundant valour was the fittest person to head the army of the dēvas, residents of heaven (against the asuras); the denizens of heaven made part of their bodies into weapons of war and gave them to Murugaṉ, who excelled with six faces and twelve hands.[195]

In the old Tamil anthologies, Murugaṉ is taken to be the son of the mother-goddess, Koṟṟavai, as seen from references in the Perumpāṇāṟṟup-paḍai and the Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai.[196] There seems to be an anthropological explanation of the change of societal preferences here. Indra who is said to have used the backbone of Sage Dadhīci for fashioning his Vajra weapon obviously belongs to the bone-using-weapon age; and he becomes superfluous when the society shifts to the use of iron weapons of war and needs a hero using the new metallic weapon. Murugaṉ, wielding the lance made of iron, comes to the front of social attention and becomes the commander of the celestial army.

Murugaṉ, first viewed as the son of the mother-goddess, gets a transformed status as the son of the male deity, Śiva, with the emergence of a patriarchally oriented society. The Paripāḍal and the Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai do not mention Murugaṉ' s birth from the womb of the damsel Umā; in the patriarchal society, birth from a mother's womb was not obviously

accorded importance. We may also consider here the parallel Purāṇic concept of Brahmā, the creator of the world, as having his birth on the lotus of the navel of Tirumāl.

The Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai celebrates Murugaṉ as a person of exciting brilliance,[197] and the Paripāḍal describes his dress, weapon, and flag shining like burning fire.[198] The poet, Nakkīrar, likens the pearl-garland swaying on Murugaṉ's chest to the flight of storks in groups against the evening sky.[199] Garland of kaḍamba flowers sways on his chest, with vaḷḷi flowers interwoven in it.[200] He wears on his head wreaths of kaḍamba and kāntaḷ blossoms.[201] Jewels of different kinds flashing rays of brilliance adorn his person.[202]

Muruganṉ's mounts, flag, and weapons

The elephant and the peacock are described as vehicles on which Murugaṉ rides; his elephant-mount is called piṇimuham.[203] His fast-moving peacock-mount with his figure of glowing brilliance on it is described as the sun seated on the fast moving peacock in the Paripāḍal.[204] He has the figures of the peacock, the cock, and the elephant as emblems on his flag. We get a full and lively description of the figure of Murugaṉ with his dress and jewels, flag, mounts, and sound-instruments played in his honour in the Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai.[205]

Murugaṉ of invincible might has irresistible anger and indignation. Ever victorious in fights, he is celebrated as fiercely valorous and mighty by poets.[206] The vēl (lance) receives special mention among his weapons.[207] The Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai describes the actions of the god's twelve hands mentioning elephant-goad (aṅkuśa) and shield as his weapons in addition to his lance.[208]

Murugaṉ's destruction of asuras

Murugaṉ assumed the leadership of the army of the dēvas and conducted their war against asura enemies; thereby his fame went beyond

that of Indra, the king of the heavenly denizens. As commander of the heavenly host, he destroyed the demons and thus ensured their freedom from enemy attacks. Murugan's putting down the asura, Sūrapadma, is particularly praised by poets. This asura assumed a form with the head of a horse and the body of a man, and entered into the sea and Murugan followed him undaunted into the sea and fought him to death.[209]

Another exploit of this God, his piercing with his lance the krauñca mountain (form of the asura) into two[210] has also received the praises of poets. He is addressed as "the husband of the damsel with gleaming forehead and spotless chastity", which alludes to his taking Dēvasēna, the daughter of Indra as his wife.[211] References to his making love to Vaḻḻi, a hill woman, and marrying her at Tirupparaṅkunṟam in secret (kaḷavu-maṇam) are given in many Saṅgam anthologies.[212]

These make clear the fact that Vaḻḻi was made Murugan's secretly wedded woman when he was the god of a society living by hunting. With the influence of the Vēdic religion, the old Tamil god, Murugan, got identified with the cult of Kumaran (Kaumāram) and became the commander of the army of the dēvas, and Indra gave him his daughter in a marriage performed with Vēdic rites and approved by the śāstras consequent on this recognition. Dēvasēna, the ceremonially wedded one, received the status of Murugan's first wife, and Vaḻḻi, the secretly wedded one, was pushed to the place of the second wife; the hunting society becoming outdated, its relic of the mistress-girl receiving a secondary place was to be expected as a cultural change.

The conflict between the secret consummation and the wedded one (kaḷavu and kaṟpu) gets openly expressed in the "sulking" (ūḍal) of Vaḻḻi-Dēvasēna figuring in the ninth poem of the Paripāḍal. The residences sacred to Murugan mentioned in the early Tamil anthologies are only two, Tirupparaṅkunṟam and Tiruchendūr.[213] The Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai adds to these four other locations, Āvinankuḍi, Ērakam, Kunṟutōrāḍal, and Paḻamudir-sōlai.

The details about Muruga<u>n</u> described above appear in the Saṅgam anthologies of great antiquity, but they must be presumed to have entered into the corpus of this poetry after the conceptualizations resulting from the influence of the Tamil culture with the Āryan one. The Tirumurugāṟṟuppaḍai and the Paripāḍal are datable as later anthologies among Saṅgam works as pointed out earlier, and we may take it that the stories of Murugaṉ in these works gained currency after the identification of the Tamil God with the Sanskrit Purāṇic God-Skanda, Kārtikēya, and Subrahmaṇya-became part of the social consciousness.

ŚIVA

The Tolkāppiyam, the grammar which assigns deities appropriately described for the four regions of the Tamil country, does not mention the name of Śiva, one of the three major gods of the Trinity. References to this God are relatively less in number in the Saṅgam anthologies excepting the Kalittokai and the Paripāḍal.

Śiva's figure

We learn that Śiva's person had a fiery red complexion from a verse in the Ahanāṉūṟu; this verse (occurring as the speech of a girl play-mate of the heroine) says that the evening, bringing the beauty of the sky and that of the sea together, resembles the dreadful might of two great deities, without mentioning the names of Śiva and Viṣṇu, but clearly implying their presence together.[214] Under the name of Kāri-uṇḍik-kaḍavuḷ (god consuming poison) signifying Śiva's exploit of swallowing the poison produced during the churning of the milk-ocean by the dēvas and asuras, he is resident on the hill named Naviram of the chief Naṉṉaṉ.[215] Śiva, with his neck stained blue-black by his drinking the poison, is also called "the Lord with the black hue on his neck" (kaṟai-miḍaṟṟu-aṇṇal).[216]

A Puṟanāṉūṟu verse describing Śiva says that he has the bull as his mount-vehicle; his braid is like red-fire; his weapon is the pick axe inescapably attacking enemies; his neck is blue-coloured resembling a

blue gem.[217] Śiva's matted hair, being long, bends and hangs down, emitting a great glow like blazing fire.[218] He bears the river goddess, Gaṅgā, in his matted locks, says Kalittokai. On account of this, his braid, comments a poet, is ever moist. The Paripāḍal calls him jaladhāri (bearer of water).[219] He wears on his head the crescent moon, shining with milk-white rays. He is pictured by poets as one seated under the banyan tree and doing penance.[220] The Puṟanāṉuṟu calls him "the god sitting under the banyan" (ālamar kaḍavuḷ) and the Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai as "the god attached to the banyan" (ālkeḷu-kaḍavuḷ).[221]

Śiva, called Mukkaṇṇaṉ, is the three-eyed God having the third eye in his forehead. A poet praises the Pāṇḍiyaṉ king as excelling the Cēra and Cōḻa kings in his angry destructive might against enemies just as Śiva's forehead eye surpasses the other two eyes in its power.[222] Śiva's axe-weapon is called kaṇicci; it is always flaming like fire and irresistible by others.[223] The bull is Śiva's mount as well as flag's ensign. It is white in hue. He has his consort Umā on his left side; the same god, appearing as the yogin in penance under the banyan tree, shows himself up on the Kailāsa-mountain as the bhōgī (enjoyer) accepting Umā, seated with him on his left, as his consort.[224] We gather that from very early times a temple to Śiva existed in the Cōḻa kingdom in a village called Ālamuṟṟam. It is mentioned as the "place of the three-eyed Lord of the ancient works of the Four Vēdas."[225]

Śiva with Sanskrit Purāṇic allusions

The Saṅgam collections have some passages associating Śiva with Vēdic formulations. He is the ancient Primal Being with long stretching matted locks; the Vēdas have sprung from his tongue, and they ever reside in him; and in token of his conferment of the Vēdas on mankind, he is called mudu-mudalvaṉ; "the most ancient Primal Being",[226] and nāṉ-maṟai mudu-nūl-mukkaṇ-selvaṉ (three-eyed Primal Being with the ancient

four Vēdas).[227] The Paripāḍal describes him as the Primal one propitiated in sacrifices accepting the oblations to the dēvas made into the fire.[228]

The Purāṇic allusions, as already stated, are fewer in six out of the eight Saṅgam anthologies. The poet Auvaiyar wishes her patron, Adiyamāṉ Neḍumāṉ Añji, long life even Lord Śiva who, in spite of having consumed the ālakāla poison, lives eternally with his beautiful neck becoming blue-hued with the poison collected there.[229] The Lord with his neck stained blue, who bent the Mēru mountain as his bow, and aimed an invincible arrow, putting to fire the three fort-towns of the asuras and thus ensured the victory of the dēvas, receives praises of the old Tamil poets.[230] This Purāṇic exploit of Śiva, alluded to in the Puṟaṉānuṟu, gets expanded recordation in the Kalittokai and the Paripāḍal. It is merely referred to in the Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai. The asterism sacred to Śiva is Tiruvādirai (star Ārdra),[231] known as Ādirai in Tamil.[232]

In the invocation to Śiva, the first verse of the Kalittokai, several Purāṇic characterizations of this God are alluded to. These are: teaching the Vēdas with their six aṅgas (parts) to Brāhmaṇa chanters, containing the fast flood of the Gaṅgā by putting the river in his matted hair, destroying the muppurams of the demons, enclosing all the visible forms on earth within himself, as drums sounded dancing the koḍukoṭṭi dance, smearing the ash of the burnt three muppurams over his body, and dancing the Pāṇḍaraṅga dance and another Kapāla dance with the head of Brahmā in his hand, as the tiger-skin on his waist swayed and the garland of koṉṟai flowers swept his chest.[233] All the dances of Śiva are said in this verse to be performed to the accompaniment of the tāla (beat) of his consort, Umā; Śiva is also described as eṇtōl-īśaṉ, eight-shouldered Lord, in the Puraṇic terms. These features of the Kalittokai verse lead to a feeling that the work may closely pre date the bhakti movement of the Tamil country.

Śiva's exploit of burning the three forts (muppurams) of the demons comes in for particular praise among his famous eight acts of glory in the

Saṅgam works.[234] The story of Rāvaṇa attempting to lift the Kailāsa mount of Śiva and getting foiled by the latter is referred to in the Kalittokai for the first time in the Saṅgam anthologies.[235] Śiva is called Kāy Kaḍavuḷ (God of destruction or punishment) betaking his role as the Destroyer of the worlds at their appointed end.[236] The Kalittokai is also the first Saṅgam work to allude to the story of Śiva protecting his devotee, Mārkaṇḍēya, from Kālaṉ, i.e. Yama, the Death-god riding his buffalo-mount to take away the former's life; Śiva kicked him to death.[237] While Umā, Śiva's consort, is spoken of in the Purāṇas as Himavāṉ's daughter, the Kalittokai and the Paripāḍal restrict themselves to the mention of Umā as Śiva's consort united with him.

It is worth noting here that the references to Śiva are fully absent in the four Saṅgam works-Naṟṟiṇai, Kuṟuntokai, Aiṅkuṟu-nūṟu, and Padiṟṟup-pattu; they are present to some extent in the Ahanāṉūṟu and the Puṟanāṉuṟu. These six works give room to consider them Saṅgam collections datable earlier than the Kalittokai and the Paripāḍal. It is a matter of further research whether the earlier four works mentioned above may be considered to have arisen prior to the Dravidian-Āryan cultural fusion.

MĀYŌṈ

Tolkāppiyar, the author of the grammar of ancient Tamil named after him as the Tolkāppiyam, mentions four gods for poetic descriptions as deities for the four regions. In this, the Mullai (Jungle and adjacent areas) region is specified as appropriate to Mayōṉ.[238] The name "Tirumāl" (identical with Māyōṉ), oft-used in bhakti literature, is not favoured in the Saṅgam poems; to denote this god they use Māl as seen in five contexts,[239] and Māyōṉ in six context.[240]

Māyōṉ: Viṣṇu of the Vēdas

There may be a doubt whether Māyōṉ is a god of indigenous Tamil origin, though the Tolkāppiyam has mentioned him. Māyōṉ's complexion

is praised for its darkness, entitling him to have originated from the Dravidian sources, besides other reasons. The Saṅgam collections and later bhakti literature link him with the Vēdic Viṣṇu; the latter name means "an omnipresent one". The Mullaip-pāṭṭu is the first Saṅgam poem to enlarge on the incarnation of Viṣṇu as Vāmaṉa and getting a boon of "three feet of earth" from Mahābali, the asura, and then outmeasuring the three worlds with the two feet.[241]

The Paripāḍal and the Kalittokai, assigned to the later stratum of the Saṅgam anthologies, contain allusions to several Purāṇic stories about Māyōṉ. The Paripāḍal praises Māyōṉ specifically mentioning the name, Tirumāl. This collection along with its supplement, Paripāḍal-Tiraṭṭu, has seven verses about Tirumāl. The Kalittokai in its verses of the Mullaik-kali section has accounts of the residents of the Mullai (jungle and attached areas) region paying obeisance to Tirumāl with their Kuravai dances. The Saṅgam poems praise Tirumāl as Neḍiyōṉ (the towering one), even as Murugaṉ is called Neḍuvēḷ (the tall Lord). We also get references to Tirumāl's towering figure stretching itself to encompass the worlds as the implication of the appellation of Neḍiyōṉ in expressions like "neḍiyōṉ aṉṉa-nallisai" (great fame like that of Neḍiyōṉ), nīṉiṟa-uruviṉ-neḍiyōṉ (Neḍiyōṉ of the blue-hued shape).[242]

Kaṇṇaṉ (Kṛṣṇa) and Baladēva

In several contexts of the Saṅgam poems, Tirumāl is spoken of as Kaṇṇaṉ, and he is further linked with his brother, Baladēva, in the unified form known as Saṅkarsṇa Vāsudēva. A poet of the Puṟanāṉuṟu praises the presence together of the two great gods, the milk-white hued one (Baladēva) of the palmyra flag and the wielder of the Discus (Viṣṇu as Kaṇṇaṉ) of the blue-hued form.[243] Another poet speaks of the presence of the two brother gods together.[244] A verse in the Naṟṟiṇai also speaks of the unified brother-gods, Kaṇṇaṉ and Balarāmaṉ.[245] These references show the antiquity of Tirumāl worship in the Tamil country.

Tirumāl's complexion is dark, and he is called Māyōṉ (of the dark-hued one). By virtue of this feature, poets sing of Tirumāl's dark figure likening it to a purified blue gem, a rain-bearing cloud, and so on.[246] Tirumāl's crown scintillates like the young, rising sun; the cloth of gold worn on his waist shines like a young, fresh sun resting over a blue mountain; this is praised as "the dress of gold" and "dress beautified by gold like moving fire" by poets.[247] Tirumāl's chest is likened to a mountain, and the garland on it, to a stream flowing down the mount. It shines like the rainbow appearing in skies of rainy weather.[248] The garland of tulasi-leaves is special to Viṣṇu; and he is praised in the Padiṟṟup-pattu and the Paripāḍal for wearing this garland of fragrance.[249] This tulasi-garland also adorns his head.[250] The jewel on his chest is celebrated as Kaustubham in the Paripāḍal.[251]

Tirumāl's consort

Tirumāl's consort, Lakṣmī, is called Mā and Tiru in the Saṅgam poems. The Vaiṣṇava religious tradition says that she resides on the right side of Tirumāl's chest. The Saṅgam poems praise Tirumāl's chest as Tiruñemir akalam (spacious chest occupied by Lakṣmī), Tirumaṟu-mārbu (one with his chest having Lakṣmī and the mole, Srivatsa), and so on.[252] The Mullaip-pāṭṭu describes the large arms of Tirumāl as Mātāṅku-taṭakkai,[253] "the large hand that supports Mā" (Lakṣmī). The Paripāḍal also sings to the same effect. As Lakṣmī, also called Tirumagaḷ, is fair-complexioned, Tirumāl' s chest is celebrated as "Seyyōḷ-sērnda-mārbu" (the chest dwelt in by the fair-complexioned one).[254] She is known also as "Poṉ". The figure of Gajalakṣmī portraying Lakṣmī seated on the lotus flower with elephants on both sides showering water and flowers on her is referred to in the Kalittokai.[255] Tirumagaḷ is regarded in old Tamil poems as the chosen goddess of wealth,[256] and the belief was prevalent that her departure from a house (in which she resided) meant the loss of wealth and prosperity for that household.[257]

Tirumāl's weapons, vehicle, flag, and places of worship

The Perumpāṉāṟṟup-paḍai alludes to the birth of the four-faced Brahmā from the lotus of Tirumāl's navel.[258] The Paripāḍal praises the beauteous eyes and the feet of Tirumāl.[259] The details of the conch and of the discus of the Lord are given in the Saṅgam anthologies considered to be of later dates. The Paripāḍal has a long description of how the conch and the discus work destruction on offenders and opponents.[260] The Garuḍa (sacred eagle) is both the vehicle and the flag emblem of Tirumāl.[261] Descriptions of Lord Viṣṇu' s form are given in the Padiṟṟup-pattu and the Paripāḍal.[262] We have descriptions of the kuravai dance performed with joined hands by cow-herds resident in the Mullai region as worship of their favoured deity, Tirumāl, in the Kalittokai.[263] The Saṅgam poems also mention places with temples of Tirumāl-Iruntaiyūr, Kuḷavāy, Tirumāliruñcōlai, and Tiruvehkā. The Perumpāṉāṟṟup-paḍai pictures Tirumāl's state of lying stretched on his bed of the primal serpent.[264]

While Śiva is regarded as the God of destruction or dissolution, Tirumāl is the god of protection, the saviour caring for beings. Kings, whose role was the guardianship of the people, came to be considered as sharers or descendant substitutes of Tirumāl himself. The poet of the Perumpāṉāṟṟup-paḍai hails his patron, Iḷantiraiyaṉ, as the "descendant of the ocean-hued Lord with Lakṣmī and Srivatsa-mole on his chest, who encompassed the vast earth (as Trivikrama)".[265]

Associates with Tirumāl

The Saṅgam poets give us some details about Ādi-śēṣaṉ, the primal serpent forming Tirumāl's couch as stated earlier. This serpent is stated to have a thousand heads, which have the power of emitting fire. Besides being the God's bed, he functions as his umbrella. [266] We have allusions to Tirumāl's flag having Garuḍa (the sacred eagle) figuring on it. [267] A

Paripāḍal verse alludes to the story of Garuḍa' s seizing amṛta (elixir) from the dēvas to end his mother's state of servitude.[268]

Tirumāl brought to birth (on his navel) the four-faced Brahmā. We learn that, when the universe was immersed by the deluge at its end, Tirumāl had it preserved in person, resting in his yogic "waking sleep" and created on the lotus of his navel the four-faced God, and through him recreated the worlds. This four-faced Creator-God also gave out the Vēdas (forming the first source of religion).[269] The Kalittokai mentions Kāmaṉ and Sāmaṉ as Tirumāl's sons.[270]

Accounts of avatāras

While Śiva has no earthly incarnations, the incarnation feature is praised as special to Tirumāl. He delights in taking earthly forms for benefiting the world in his avatāras. This Sanskrit word means "descent from above". We find references to several avatārs in the Saṅgam anthologies, more particularly in the Kalittokai and the Paripāḍal. Tirumāl's avatāra as the out-measurer of the worlds has been cited earlier. In his Varāha (boar) avatāra, he lifted up and carried the earth on his tusk when it was sunk in the waters of the primal deluge.[271] The earth damsel (Nilamagaḷ) thus rescued is celebrated as one of Tirumāl' s consorts. The Narasimha (man-lion) avatāra is spoken of in the Paripāḍal, in which Tirumāl burst out from a pillar in a man's form with a lion's head on behalf of his devotee, Prahalāda and killed the latter's tormentor-father, Hiraṇyakaśipu.[272] The Paraśurāma avatāra (incarnation with axe on the shoulder) is mentioned in the Ahanāṉūṟu.[273] Allusions to the incarrnation as Rāma are fewer in number than we may expect. A verse in the Puṟanāṉuṟu speaks of Rāma as kaḍunteṟal Irāmaṉ,[274] "Raman of might hard to fight with." The Ahanāṉūṟu has an allusion to Rāma's taking counsel with his friends regarding the preparation for the expedition on Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā at Koḍikkarai sea shore.[275]

Stories of the incarnation of Tirumāl as Kaṇṇaṉ (Kṛṣṇa) seem to have been relatively more familiar to the old Tamil people as seen from the

Saṅgam poems.[275] Kaṇṇaṉ's exploit of finishing out Keśi is mentioned in both the Kalittokai and the Paripāḍal.[276] Another exploit of his destroying the wrestlers opposing him on the occasion of a wrestling match is alluded to in the Kalittokai.[277] The kuravai dance which Kaṇṇaṉ performed with the cowherd-women finds mention in the Paripāḍal.[278] An Ahanāṉūṟu verse refers in a simile to Kaṇṇaṉ's bending low the kurunta tree so that its foliage could be used to hide their nudity by the women playfully deprived (by Kaṇṇan) of their clothes left on the shore as they bathed in the river, Yamunā.[279] These childhood-happenings of Kṛṣṇa recorded in the Bhāgavata-Pūrāṇa would seem to be a collection of stories current in the Tamil country and known to the Tamil people earlier. George Hart says that the earliest reference in Tamil to the Rasa-līla sports of Kaṇṇaṉ with cowherd maids may be this verse.[280]

The Purāṇic story of Tirumāl's assuming the form of a beautiful damsel called Mōhiṉi and outwitting the asuras to distribute the amṛta (nectar) only to the dēvas is narrated in the Paripāḍal.[281] It also describes this God taking the form of a swan and fanning with its feathers the world, recovering and drying it up while the waters of the Deluge flooded it.[282] We also learn from the same work that there existed a separate shrine to Ādiseṣa[283] (primal serpent) in Iruntaiyūr, a part of Madurai.

The Paripāḍal and the Pāñcarātra Āgamas

A comparison of the details in the Saṅgam poems about Tirumāl with those in Sanskrit scriptural works shows that he is more closely related to Vēdic religion (as Viṣṇu) than Śiva, Murugaṉ, and Koṟṟavai, as pointed out earlier. The verses on Tirumāl in the Paripāḍal support this position. This work calls the Vēda, transmitted orally through chantings from generation to generation without being written down, as vāymoḻi[284] (uttered word or language) and also as anādi (timeless, without a specific origin).[285] Tirumāl is (the God), the dharma of the Brāhmaṇas;[286] and the Vēda is called andaṇar arumaṟai (the valued possession of the chanting andaṇar). This means that Tirumāl is known (by experience) to those knowing the

Vēdas.[287] He is the knower of the Vēdas along with their six aṅgas[288] or affiliated areas of knowledge, āṟaṟi-kaḍavuḷ.[289] We may mention here that this attribute of the Vēdic knowledge is also associated with Śiva by the Saṅgam poets.

Tirumāl is identified as the yāga or ritual performed by the andaṉar.[290] He is the creator fashioning the world after its dissolution at the end of cyclic yugas.[291] The lines of the verse speaking of Tirumāl as the creator also describe the creative process of the world, and the editor, U.Vē. Saminatha Ayyar, points out that the details mentioned are found in the Pūruṣa-sūkta of the Vēda.[292] Tirumāl is the originator of time and is himself the past, present, and the future time.[293] He is praised as the source of the origin, dissolution, and maintenance of the world;[294] "He is all things," sings the Paripāḍal poet.[295] His form which cannot be delimited as "having" this or that limit (as it pervades the universe) is praised; this tribute reminds us of Kaṉṉaṉ's viśva-rūpa-darśana (revelation of his cosmic form) in the Bhagavad-gītā. The four vyūha-mūrtis (emanations of Godhead for different functions) of Kaṉṉaṉ as Vāsudēva with reddish eyes and dark person, and Baladēva as Saṅkarṣṇa, with dark eyes and white person, and Kāmaṉ as Pradyumna with reddish fair body, and Aniruddha having a greenish body, are spoken of in the Paripāḍal.[296]

Tirumāl's incarnations are forms which he assumes at his will and are not to be taken to mean "births" in the human sense. The Paripāḍal praises this divine feature addressing Tirumāl: "There is no birth, which you have not taken; yet you have no one who brought you to birth."[297] This, along with similar assertions about Śiva never being born and Murugaṉ not born of a mother's womb, seem to have arisen in a male-dominated society considering birth through a mother's womb as demeaning to divine beings.

The name "Nārāyaṇa" figuring in the eight-syllabled mantra (Ōm namō Nārāyaṇāya) is explained by Parimēl Aḻagar's commentary on the Paripāḍal line: "Your appearance and extensiveness are on water."[298] He expounds: Nāram (water) + ayaṇam (residing), with the further clarification:

"Nārāyaṇa is named after his residence on the waters (of the ocean)."[299] Another line of this work says: "Tirumāl appears before his contemplating devotees in the form cherished by them, though he takes many incarnations and shows himself in various guises on various occasions."[300] Tirumāl is the embodiment of liberation[301] (from human birth and death) as well as the liberator in one.[302]

According to the Paripāḍal, though Godhead appears divided as the Trinity with the differentiation of the three duties of creation, protection, and destruction assigned to the four-faced Brahmā, Tirumāl, and Śiva, respectively, the supreme God is one only. Tirumāl performs these three functions appearing as three gods for the different purposes.[303] These ideas convey the formulations of the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra Āgamas. The Paripāḍal verses on Tirumāl as a Vēdic God must have arisen in an ambience of long cultivation of Vēdic learning; they appear, so to say, as "the morning star" of the Vaiṣṇava bhakti movement of succeeding days.

INDRA

This celestial chief, Indra, figuring prominently in the Vēdas, finds a place in the Tamil literary trdition also. Tolkāppiyar refers to him as Vēndaṉ, the god described as the "lord of the Marudam (cultivated field) region". But in the Saṅgam poems there is no mention of Indra as the god of the Marudam areas. There was a general belief in Indra, the lord of svarga-loka (the happy heaven), welcoming heroes who entered this heaven on their deaths in valorous fighting. A poet imagines that the drum of Indra's mansion in svarga-loka sounded to welcome a monarch of munificence named Āy-Aṇḍiraṉ on his death.[304] Indra has his weapon, the Vajrāyuda (thunder-bolt). He is praised on this account as "the towering one with the Vajra weapon in his large hand".[305] The Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai describes Indra as riding his Airāvadam (elephant) having four tusks; he has a thousand eyes, and he has attained the position of Indra, the king of the god celestials, after performing hundred ritual sacrifices and conquering enemies.[306]

Aspects of Indra similar to those mentioned above and praised in the Paripāḍal are the following: "a rich, prosperous lordly figure of the heavenly world"; "a valued high divinity evoking respectful fear"; "a guardian of the Mēru mount of the north", "one with a thousand eyes," and "one with the Vajra weapon held in his hands."[307] A verse in the Paripāḍal-Tiraṭṭu compares the bathing of the Pāṇḍiya king to that of Indra with his women-dancers in the Gaṅgā river of the heaven.[308] Indra's part in the story of the birth of Murugaṉ has been stated earlier. We learn from the Paripāḍal that the story of Indra attempting to seduce Akalya, the wife of sage Gautama and getting cursed by the sage, is said to have been represented in a painting in the Murugaṉ temple at Tirupparaṅgkuṉṟam, and people viewing this scene spoke low of Indra and Akalya.[309] A festival to Indra known as Indra-viḻa is mentioned in the Aiṅkuṟu-nūṟu;[310] we find that this festival is elaborately described in Silappadhikāram, a long poem of later times.

The world of the dēvas

We have references to dēvas and their world in the Saṅgam anthologies. The dēvas are honoured by many names like amarar (deathless ones), avi -uṇavinōr (partakers of food-offerings in ritual sacrifices), indirar (Indra's men), uyarntōr (high ones), aiyar (respected ones), nāṟṟa-uṇavinōr (partakers of fragrant food), mēlōr (residents on the high), vānattu nilaipeṟu-kaḍavuḷ (divinities established in the heavenly kingdom), and vāṉōr (people of the heavenly region).[311] They live on the Mēru and on the Himālaya mountains happily with their celestial women.[312]

There are thirty-three celestials. The Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai and the Paripāḍal give the break-up of the thirty-three as: twelve Ādityas (suns), two Maruts, eight Vasus, and eleven Rudras.[313] Along with these are classified eighteen groups like bhūtas, paisācar, tārā-gaṇam as celestial beings. These beings are said to live at Uttaraguru, north of the Mēru mount, in happiness, unmixed with sorrow, according to the Padiṟṟup-pattu.[314] Details about the world of the celestials are given in various

Saṅgam works;[315] and its high status can be earned only by those who have done good deeds in this life.[316] It has been praised by poets with various expressions like: aridu-cel-ulakam (world hard to reach), uyarndōr-ulakam (world of the high), uyar-nilai-ulakam (the higher world), dēvar-ulakam, toyyā-ulakam (world not sagging down), puttēḷ ulakam (celestial world), and mēlōr-ulakam (the world of kings of high position).[317]

The dēvas living in the celestial world are divine beings with pure bodies giving out a divine brilliance and winkless eyes. They wear never-fading flower-garlands. Their women are called respectfully as antara-magaḷir (women of the high sky), vāṉuṟai-magaḷir (women resident in the world above). The dēvas partake of the food oblation offered by Brāhmaṇas in ritual sacrifices. Tirumāl distributed them the medicine of amṛtam (ambrosia) conferring deathlessness on its partakers.[318]

The Tamil people of old times used to invoke the blessings of those who conveyed a piece of good news to them that they may attain the celestial world if we work hard to win ambrosia-drinking dēvar, or they may be privileged to drink. ambrosia.[319] The belief was current that people who had lived worthily in this world were welcomed in the other world by the dēvas as guests and that the heroes, dying of wounds sustained in victorious fights, would go to heaven and wed dēvar-women and live happily with them.[320]

7. MEETING AND FUSION OF CULTURES

In very ancient times pre dating the Āryan contact, the Tamil people lived according to the indigenous culture evolved by them. Organized in tribal groups, they worshipped the many divinities which claimed obeisance in their groups. As pointed out earlier, they offered animal sacrifices to appease their deities. There was no observance of rituals of Vēda-Āgama origin.

The position changed with the entry of the waves of Āryan settlers. The Tamil kings took to the Vēdic ritual sacrifices and allied observances

performing them enthusiastically with the officiating Brāhmaṇa priests. Temple worship also got organized according to the Vēdic procedures. Some of the old native Tamil deities were assimilated with the gods of the Vēdic pantheon. Murugaṉ became one with Kārtikēya, Subrahmaṇya, and Āṟumugaṉ. The Mullai deity, Māyōṉ, got assimilated with Viṣṇu; the Bhāgavata cult in South India got merged with that of Vāsudēva-Nārāyaṇa; the Pālai deity, Koṟṟavai, evolved into Durgā, Mahiṣāsura-mardani, and Pārvatī, consorts of Śiva.

Brāhmaṇas

The priestly settlers (Andaṇar) from the North of the Tamil country excelled in their learning and practice of the Vēdic scriptures. Their personality and life-style are described in many contexts of the Saṅgam anthologies. They were called the "twice-born" and Pārppaṉar. In their gentle nature, they were, like cows, tender-hearted; they used to offer their daily worship purifying themselves by bathing every morning and evening, and engaging in ritual pūjās with wet clothes. With their five senses conquered and put under control, they were masters of the learning and chanting of the four Vēdas.

They maintained the sacred fire in their homes paying obeisance to it. This sacrificial fire which they circummbulated before each observance was called muttī (three fires), having three prescribed types. During their student life (brahmacarya) involved in Vēdic studies and chantings, they lived lives of abstemious celibate penance, holding in their hands a stick and a kamaṇḍala (water-pot) for their physical needs.

They had their hair tied in tufts, and their houses, with their floors swept with moistened cow-dung, looked clean and pure. They raised cows in their house; dogs and fowl were taboo to them. They were called aṟutoḻilōr (those ,with six duties), and the duties ordained for them were ōdal (chanting the Vēdas), ōduvittal (causing others to chant), vēḷvi-iyaṟṟal (performing sacrifices), veṭpittal (enabling others to perform sacrifices), īdal (giving in charity), and ēṟṟal (receiving gifts).[321]

Vēdic sacrifices

The Vēdic Brāhmaṇas were greatly influential with the ruling Tamil kings, who warmly welcomed them to their courts as advisers and as priests for their ritual sacrifices. We get details of happenings in this regard from the Saṅgam poetic works like the Puṟanāṉuṟu, Padiṟṟup-pattu, and Maduraik-Kāñci. The Pāṇḍiyaṉ King, Mudukuḍimip-Peruvaḻudi, got the special appellation of Pal-yāga-sālai (of many sacrifice-performances) in token of his performance of many ritual sacrifices so that a poet rhetorically asks: "Were the pillars the king established at the end of the sacrifices greater in number, or were those who had spent disreputable lives greater?"[322]

A Cōḻa king is called Perunaṟ Kiḷḷi who performed the Rājasūya sacrifice,[323] but the verses in which he figures do not mention any sacrifice he performed except a fragmented line of a verse giving room to a surmise in this regard.[324] The Puṟanāṉuṟu states that the Cōḻa king, Karikāl Peruvaḷattāṉ, went with his queens into the place of the sacrifice and completed the rituals with the help of the officiating andaṇar priests.[325]

The Padiṟṟup-pattu tells us that the Cēra king, Palyāṉaic-celkeḻu-Kuṭṭuvaṉ, propitiated the celestials by Vēdic sacrifices and also pleased guests by his "human yāga" (sacrifice) of entertaining visitors coming to him for his hospitality; when his priest, Neḍumbāratāyaṉār, expressed his longing to go to the svarga along with his wife by the merit of ritual observances, the king is said to have obliged him by performing ten big ritual sacrifices guided by expert Vēdic andaṇar, at the end of which the couple disappeared, reaching the svarga of their ardent wish.[326]

Another Cēra king, Selvak Kaḍuṅko Vāḻiyādaṉ, is praised by the poet Kapilar as having pleased the celestials by his performances of sacrifices and gladdening the hearts of elders far gone in Vēdic lore.[327] A third Cēra king, Peruñcēral Irumboṟai, is commended by the poet, Arisilkiḻār, for performing sacrifices, following the prescriptions he learned from the Vēdic experts and observing the austerities laid down in the Vēdas.[328]

The Saṅgam poems speak of the performances of Vēdic sacrifices not only by the three "crowned kings", but also by chiefs of smaller territories and munificent patron lords. Among these latter performers are mentioned[329] Adiyamāṉ Neḍumāṉ Añji and Malaiyamāṉ Tirumuḍikkāri, and Koḍaip-porunaṉ called Teṉṉavaṉ Maṟavaṉ Paṇṇi. Besides kings, chiefs, and patron princes mentioned above, we gather from the Paṭṭiṉap-pālai[330] that merchants also performed Vēdic sacrifices. The Perumpāṇāṟṟup-paḍai extends this performance to sages living renounced lives in forests as it says that their sacrifices were aided by the forest animals.[331]

There is a reference in the Ahanāṉūṟu to the performance of a big sacrifice by Parasurāmar, a great Brāhmaṇa, wielder of the Parasu (axe) weapon, and the destroyer of many kings (out of vengeance).[332] The poet, Kapilar, sings that a chief named Iruṅkōvēḷ emerged out of a homa-kuṇḍam (sacrificial fire pit) of a sacrifice performed by a sage from North India.[333] The details of rituals on sacrifices perfortned by the andaṇar are mentioned by the poet, Āvūr Mūlaṅkiḻar, in the course of his praise of Kavuṇiyaṉ Viṇṇaṉ Tāyaṉ, a Brāhmaṇa of Cōḻa-nādu.[334]

When performing the rituals, the performer wears on his sacred thread (on his breast) a piece of skin of a stag; his wives attend to helping duties wearing cālakam ornament; ghee obtained from the milk of seven kinds of cows from forests and from villages is offered as oblation in the sacrifice so liberally that even abundant offerings of water get "shamed" by the extra-liberality. The visitor-guests at the sacrifice are treated to the best food; no animal offering is mentioned.

Tirumāl himself is stated to appear as the Vēdic fire-sacrifice in the Paripāḍal; the reference in this regard is explicated thus by its great modem editor, U.Vē. Sāminatha Ayyar:[335] "Oh possessor of the Garuḍa-flag! The officiating Vēdic priest's speech is your shape; you are the Yūpa (sacrifice-pillar) taking as your food the sacrificed animal. The andaṇar

see your appearance in the glow of the brightly burning fire kindled by them according to the Vēdic prescriptions."

Andaṇar honoured in society

The Brāhmaṇs performing Vēdic sacrifices formed an honoured upper stratum of the society as kings bestowed gifts of gold and other valuable things and lands on them. When such gifts of charity were given, the Puṟanāṉūṟu and the Padiṟṟup-pattu tell us they were accompanied by droppings of water as a ritualistic oblation.[336] This makes us infer that the Dharma-śāstra formulation about the ritual of offering gift (dāna) had permeated into the accepted practices of the Tamil country by that time. Kings bent down in veneration when andaṇar blessed them with their extended hands.[337] One of the obligations kings took upon themselves was to inform the andaṇar before a war started, and send them to a place of safety, away from the area of danger.[338]

It is clear that by the time of the anthologization of the poems of the Saṅgam age the Āryan faiths and worship-practices had spread out and were striking roots in the Tamil country. The old Tamil deities like Murugaṉ, Māyōn, Koṟṟavai, and Kūṟṟuvaṉ (Death) were assimilated into the pantheon of deities of the Vēdic religion. Murugaṉ, Śiva, Pārvatī, and Tirumāl, now reckoned gods of "the great tradition", hark back clearly to old native deities of the Tamils; the worship of the gods of "the little tradition", still widely prevalent in the Tamil land, is an obvious continuation of old worship-practices. We also find that even in modern days these gods get "assimilated into the Vēda-Āgama religious framework, and got elevated as "great gods".

In the reign of Tirumalai Nayakaṛ of Madurai, the old Paṇḍārams (priests) carrying out the worship of Murugaṉ at Paḻaṉi and other places were replaced by Śaiva Brāhmāṇas carrying out Vēda-Āgama ritual-pūjā. This process of priests belonging to Kulālar, Vēḷār, Paṇḍārams, and such communities giving place to Śaiva Brāhmaṇas in many temples is

an ongoing tendency in many villages, and it has been termed "Sanskritization" by sociologists. The poems in the Puṟanāṉūṟu and in the Pattup-pāṭṭu collection like Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai, Maduraik-Kāñci, and Paṭṭiṉap-pālai, which show Āryan cultural diffusion in the Tamil land have to be ascribed to the later end-period of the Saṅgam era on account of this feature. This matter requires more multi-dimensional researches and their co-ordination.

8. JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

Contact between North and South India goes back to a few centuries before the Christian era to a period before Emperor Aśoka reaching up to the time of the consolidation of monarchical rule emerging out of a tribal organization of the Tamil society. The old inscriptions in Brāhmī script discovered in some villages in the area of the Pāṇḍiyaṉ rule give support to a surmise that the Jains had come into the Tamil land before Aśoka and propagated their religion.

But we find little evidence of the impact of Jainism or Buddhism in the Saṅgam anthologies. The Puṟanāṉūru, Padiṟṟup-paṭṭu, Kalittokai, Paripāḍal, and Pattup-pāṭṭu display the predominant influence of the Vēdic religion in their verses. K. Sivathambi considers that the stories about the Saṅgams in the Iṟaiyaṉār Kaḷaviyal-Urai show the attempt to portray Tamil literature in Vaidika terms,[339] apart from the stories being not credible as historical evidence.

The ancient Tamil people were greatly involved in the concerns of the life of this world as against the next one, which Jains and Buddhists focused on, denying the claims of present living; renunciation of this life was what they sought. This ideal of renunciation did not impress the Tamil people, who wished to have the best of the lives they were living. The poet, Māṅguḍi Kiḻār, advises the Pāṇdiya king, Neḍuñceḻiyaṉ (who won the battle of Talaiyālaṅkāṉam), to taste and enjoy the pleasures of this life.[340] Another poet, Māṅguḍi Marudaṉār, gives the same manner of

advice to this king at the end of the Maduraik-Kāñci.[341] This advice reminds us in a way of the Grecian philosophy of Epicureanism.

From the poems like Maduraik-Kāñci and Paṭṭiṉap-pālai in the Pattup-pāṭṭu collection, we learn that the Jaina-Buddhist influence was more prominent in the big cities than in rural areas. The two poems mentioned above give evidence to the existence of Jaina and Buddhist temples in the two cities of Madurai and Kavirippūm-paṭṭiṉam; there is archaeological evidence of the ruins of the Buddhist temple at the latter place. The Maduraik-Kāñci tells us of women resorting to Buddhist temples with their families for worship.[342] This work also speaks of the renounced Jaina anchorites with their residences in Madurai.

These wise men, aware of the happenings of the past, present, and future, were scrupulous observers of fasts and other austerities, and their bodies were lean as a result; they were men of great learning and humility. They carried kamaṇḍalas (water-pots) and uṟis (thread-contrivance for suspending small food items) with them to provide for their requirements on their days of (fastings).[343] Their bodies, looking thin with frequent fasts, were also layered with accumulated excrescences, as they did not bathe fearing that they would harm invisible living things in the waters by their action. A poet has compared their appearance to barren hills in summer bereft of their attraction. [344]

The impact of Jaina and Buddhist faiths

From the name of the Saṅgam poets given in the anthologies along with other evidence, we can infer that Iḷampōdiyār, Sīttalaic-Cāttaṉār, Aiyādicciṟu Veṇḍēraiyār, and Siṟuveṇḍēraiyār belong to Buddhism (with Bodhi and Teravāda nomenclatures) and that Ulōccaṉār belongs to Jainism. But the compositions of these poets contain no trace of their faith so that it may even be doubted whether the compilers of the anthologies deliberately omitted extraneous ideas from the collections. However, some Saṅgam verses show an underlying penetration of Jaina-Buddhist thought-content.

A poet known as Ōrēruḻavar grieves that his life as a householder with kinsmen has so tied him up as to prevent him from leading a care-free life.[345] Another poet, Pakkuḍukkai Naṉkaṇiyār, blames the creator of this world as one without good sense; in his world there is joy in one house with women having their husbands by their side; in another house women losing their husbands are all in tears and sorrow. Indeed, this world is an unjust one.[346] The poet, Siṟuveṇḍēraiyār, raises his voice against wars as he says: "Oh Brāhmaṇas; wars are not waged on merciful considerations; they are fought to covet the riches of others. Wars are not sanctioned in the books regulating social conduct "[347] This verse is an indirect derision of the idealization of war holding that heroes of war sacrificing their lives in fighting go to a heaven meant for them.

Yet another poet, Aiyātic-ciṟu-Veṇḍēraiyār, puts across the Buddhist nihilist doctrine of śūnya-vāda to the Tamil people as he says:[348] "Kings who held the whole world enthralled with their rule and passed away with death are greater in number than the sand particles blown ashore by the waves of the ocean. None born on earth can escape death; the truth is that birth means death, one day or other. Renounce the life of this world before your last day comes when acceptance of the bali at the cremation-ground by the attendant-outcastes is your lot."

The Ājīvaka doctrine of the inevitability of fate is set out by Kaṇiyaṉ Pūṅguṉṟaṉār in his oft-quoted verse:[349] "yādum ūre, yāvarum kēḷir" (Every place belongs to me and everybody is my kinsman). Thoughts of non-Vēdic faiths such as the above cited are only a few in the total corpus of the Saṅgam poetry.

9. IDEALS SHAPING LIFE-PATTERNS

So far the attempt has been made to examine and set out the religious beliefs and practices of the Tamils inferable from the Saṅgam literature spanning some centuries in its production. The Tamils followed some worship practices of their own and obviously linked them with the beliefs

and observances of the Vaidika faith when contact with the latter began and grew in volume. Yet, it would appear that their indigenous beliefs and ideals continued to remain substantially unchanged even in the new cultural mix-up.

"Passing nature" of this-worldly life

There was a firm understanding of the instability and transience of life in this world among the Tamil people recorded in several Saṅgam verses. A poet by name Mudukaṉṉaṉ Sāttaṉār of Uṟaiyūr says that the moon moves about in the sky to convince even people of no learning that it waxes and wanes, that all living beings born are bound to die and are reborn after death.[350] Other such declarations are to the effect: "This world appears and functions, and is like the guises of the dancers, which disappear, and again in their stage-acting during festival times appear and then go out of sight."[351]

"The death of all born in the world is Nature's dispensation."[352] "While in one house the death-announcing drum sounds, in another the wedding-tabur sounds."[353] Nothing stands permanently in this world; permanency is not the characteristic of it; it is a world which stays not without changing.[354] Even if one is endowed with a life of complete happiness with no sorrow at all, as it is in the world of the celestials, the happiness of this world will not accompany him on his death.[355]

The thoughts on the instability of life of the Tamils above cited are different from the instability with which Jains and Buddhists regard life. Like the latter, they did not regard household-life as an obstacle to reach the higher world, or urge people to take to asceticism even in youth without waiting for death, which may come at any moment.

The followers of the Vēdic faiths did not subscribe to the Jaina-Buddhist denial of life's validity. but they hold up asceticism, depreciating household-life as "petty, like the little white mustard seed (aiyavi)".[356] The Tamil people, steering clear of these notions, accepted life as it

presented itself and wished to enjoy its pleasures to the extent possible. The poet, Māṅguḍi Marudaṉār, gives the blessing and advice to his patron-king, Neḍuñceḻiyaṉ, who won the battle of Talaiyālaṅkāṉam in this manner: "May you live with pleasure, drinking the fragrant cool wine (madhu) handed over to you in golden vessels by beautiful braceleted maids. The world commends only those who love such pleasurable lives."[357] This poet gives the same counsel and blessing to this king in another poem of his, Maduraik-Kāñci.[358]

Other poets too bless monarchs in the same way. Nakkīrar, son of Maduraik-Kaṇakkāyaṉar, blesses the Pāṇḍiyaṉ king, Naṉmāṟaṉ, with the sobriquet, Ilavandikaip-paḷḷit-tuñciya.[359] Auvaiyār, the famous woman poet, blesses in similar terms the three kings-Cēramāṉ Māriveṇkō, Pāṇḍiyaṉ Ukkirap-Peruvaḻudi who conquered Kāṉap-pēreyil, and Cōḻaṉ Perunaṟ Kiḷḷi who had performed the Rājasūya sacrifice-whom she saw seated together and felt delighted.[360]

These blessings of poets carry also the exhortation to the kings to magnanimously share their riches with supplicants or learned Brāhmaṇs seeking their help. From these verses we may infer that the Tamil people cherished as a value the pleasurable life, which makes itself useful to others.

Doing good

The Tamil people, conscious of the passing nature of human life, felt that the life given to them by the dispensation of destiny had to be lived in a manner benefiting humans. Nākariyar, also called Saṅga-Varuṇar, says in a verse: "Most people in this world do not understand what virtue is. The kings who exercised their sway, benefiting all people, are only a few."[361] The Tamils felt that, in the life of this world full of inequalities, it is incumbent on everyone taking human birth to do virtuous deeds. The poetess, Auvaiyār, says: "Nothing comes with us as our companion when our days end in death except good deeds done. This is also the teaching of our texts of conduct, so far as I know."[362]

Only those men with unclear and indecisive minds will raise doubts questioning whether one will be able to do good deeds or not. Those with determined minds can well achieve their objectives. One going on an elephant -hunt with determination can hunt it down easily; one without determination can fail in hunting down even little birds and return empty handed. The strength of the determination to do good was all important for people in the Tamils' belief.[363] They cherished the ideal that human life is for the purpose of bettering the state of others regardless of self-interest.[364]

Cōḻaṉ Nalluruttiraṉ says in his verse: "Men's lives should not be lived, exploiting the benefits of the labour of others as rats do. Rats steal the rice-grains grown with the labour of men and collect them in their holes. Since the tiger lives by its own labour, only when a hunted animal falls by its right side the tiger makes a meal of it. It thus relies solely on self-effort. People should live like the tiger working to earn their food. "[365]

The king, Toṇḍaimāṉ Iḷandiṟaiyaṉ, reflects in a verse: "Leading a life is like driving a vehicle-cart. If the driver happens to be a noble man of good qualities, the vehicle will go on pleasantly without obstruction; if he happens to be bereft of good promptings, the vehicle will get bogged in marsh and give trouble. "[366] The poetess, Auvaiyār sings: "What does it matter whether a region is populated, or forested, or an area of depression, or elevation? To the extent that the people concerned are industrious, the world (of their residence) will prove to be good (and prosperous)." [367]

Noble human qualities

The Tamil people valued human virtues and wished that each man should have them. Men who possessed high gentlemanly characteristics were applauded by the appellation, "sāṉṟōr" (high-born men of noble principles). Marutaṉ Iḻanāgaṉār tells his patron, Nāñcil Vaḷḷuvaṉ, with proud conviction: "I shall not resort to lying for the sake of managing the livelihood of myself and my kinsmen. I will always speak only the truth."[368] Another poet, Nākariyar, also called Saṅkavaruṇar, gives us a full

statement of all the good qualities he expects the Tamil people to possess.

"They should refrain from eating beyond a chosen limit, should get angry only in a little measure (on rare occasions), be accustomed to limit themselves to speaking a few words when required, and willingly hearken to the good words others convey to them, display subtle understanding of things, and give with great magnanimity to those who seek their charity and move with humility among all people speaking sweet words of gentleness. Only a few people living with these high characteristics are found in this world."[369]

This birth and the next one

All Indian religions believe in rebirth of all living beings; the ancient Tamils were no exception as they speak of this worldly life as immai and of the other world of rebirth as maṟumai. They believed that a good deed done in immai (this birth) was productive of an appropriate good result in maṟumai (next birth).[370] The poet, Kapilar, wishes prayerfully in his verse that "pāl" (a divine force like destiny) should enable the continuance of the friendship he had with his patron-chief, Pāri, in his existing birth and in the next one as well. [371] The concept of pāl, the force working to carry results of actions from one birth to another, is similar to the karma theory, one of the basic philosophical doctrines in Indian philosophy, and deserves to be examined whether it is a parallel thereto or otherwise.

The Tamil people's general belief was that doing a good beneficial deed to others would be productive of good in the next birth, if not in the then current one. According to them. thinking of benefits accruing in return for good actions commercializes charity as a things sold for profit. The poet, Ēṇiccēri Muḍamosiyār,[372] praises the patron Āy Aṇḍiran as eschewing all ideas of "selling charity" and realizing that helping others liberally for its own sake is the preferred path of revered men of the past. He gave away gold and riches to all who came to him as supplicants without restraint. Another poet, Pisirāndaiyār, says that the presence of

such men of generosity in his village made him youthful, avoiding greying hairs. or skin-folds, of old age.[373]

In the Tamil land there was as a general belief in the accrual of results of good action being enjoyed by their performers after their deaths in the world of the great ones.[374]

This went with another belief that warriors, who faced heroic death in the battle field withhout turning their back to danger and running away, would go to a high heaven,[375] and sport with the celestial damsels there who wear unfading garlands. This exaltation of heroic death in fighting led to a custom of putting bodies of kings, who had died without facing battle, on darba grass, severing them with the sword (as a symbol of brave death) and then burying them.[376] This procedure appears to be a mixture of Vēdic ritual and an old Tamil custom. A Puṟanāṉūṟu verse tells us that, when children were born dead or as pieces of flesh, such cowardly emanations were severed with a sword and buried.[377] These pieces of evidence testify to the fact that regard for engaging heroically in fighting was a basic motivation for the Tamil people's way of life.

The life well-lived

This worldly life with its pains and pleasures was fearlessly embraced and lived by the ancient Tamil people. They had thoughts of the world hereafter, but they sought to utilize to the full the opportunities of the present existence. Man should live as a good person; he should pass his days in pleasure with his wives; he should taste to the full the joys of this life, wearing garlands of compelling fragrance and smearing the sweet smelling sandal paste on his person. He should root out enemies opposing him and should cultivate firm friendships with his friends.

Further, the Tamil people understood that they should not obsequiously follow anybody wondering at his superior strength; equally, they should not treat contemptuously those weaker than themselves. They should take things as they are and give even weaker people their due respect.

Even when they lacked the wherewithal, they should not resort to alms from others for their living. To those seeking them for charitable help, they should give with pleasure of whatever they possess without a "no". It is this pattern of high-minded living, which the Tamil people held up for themselves.

The Puṟanāṉūṟu praises the Pāṇḍiyaṉ king, Neḍuñceḻiyaṉ, on his death as an exemplar of this kind of life. As the poet, Pēreyiṉ-Muṟuvalār exclaims in his tribute of utter sorrow[378] (called kaiyaṟu-nilai): "What does it matter whether this king's dead body be buried in earth or burnt on the pyre (after his having lived a full ideal life)?" This poetic outburst stands out as a noble portrait of the lives of the great ones among the old Tamil people.

10. CONCLUSION

This paper has been devoted to a statement of the beliefs and practices of the ancient Tamil people on worship and religion. These beliefs and practices are not confined to a specific early period, but have evolved over centuries of the ancient era. They may seem to contain conflicts of approach, but these have to be understood not as conflicts but as the results thrown up by a long period of development. During the centuries of the composition of the Saṅgam verses collected later into anthologies, old Tamil society was undergoing a stage-by-stage evolution of its organization, and the collections represent differing responses in their verses to these evolutionary changes.

When we closely examine the anthologies, we find that the Puṟanāṉūṟu, Kalittokai, Paripāḍal, and Pattup-pāṭṭu have a fairly clear predominance over the beliefs and ideas of the Vēdic religon. In the anthologies on aham (love) themes, there is no reference to Vēdic ideas. It has been stated earlier that there is no mention of Śiva in the four collections of the Kuṟuntokai, Naṟṟiṉai, Aiṅkuṟu-niūṟu, and Padiṟṟup-pattu. The names of sages of Sanskrit works, like Mārkāṇḍeyaṉār, Vālmīkiyār, Piramaṉār

are found only in the Puṟanāṉūṟu, and in no other collection. Likewise, only this work has many references to Vēdic sacrifices. These facts make us reflect on the need for more research on the date of anthologization of this work.

Another point claims our attention. We learn from researchers that the Saṅgam verses arose in oral singing and recitation, and were later reduced to writing. Bards called Pāṇar were the propagators of oral renditions of the verses; their place was taken over by poet-composers. When researching into Saṅgam verses and their anthologies, we have to give importance to the oral tradition and determine the three stages of their growth-their oral currency, their getting recorded in writing, and their anthologization of select verses, and then arrive at a sequence of their evolution.

NOTES

1. N. Subrahmanian, Saṅgakāla Vāḻviyal, Madras, 1986, p. 5.

2. Kaḷaviyal or Iṟaiyaṉār-Ahapporuḷ-ūrai, Saiva Siddhantak-Kazhakam, Chennai, 1976, p. 5.

3. Among scholarly discussions on the Saṅgams the following may be considered noteworthy: (i) M. Raghava Iyengar, Ārāyccit-tokuti, Chennai, 1964; (ii) A. Chidambaranar, Tamiḻc-Caṅgaṅgaḷiṉ Varalāṟu, Chennai, 1948; (iii) K.K. Pillai, Tamizhaka Varalāṟu: Makkaḷum Paṇpāḍum, Chennai, 1981; (iv) Cu. Vittiyāṉandaṉ, Tamiḻar-sālbu, Chennai, 1971; (v) S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, Ilakkiyac-Cintaṉaikaḷ, Chennai, 1956; (vi) Kamil Zvelibil, Tamil Literature, Wiesbaden, 1974; (vii) P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, History of the Tamils, New Delhi, 1983; (viii) J.R. Marr, Eight Anthologies, Chennai, 1985; (ix) S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, History of Tamil Language and Literature, Chennai, 1988.

4. N. Subrahmanian, op. cit., p. 9; KA. Nilakanta Sastri, Pāṇḍiyaṉ Kingdom, Madras, 1972, p. 17.

5. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, Saṅga Ilakkiyam (2 Vols) Chennai, 1967, p. 1405.

6. Works cited in foot-note No. 3

7. (i) George Hart, The Poems of Ancient Tamil, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 8-9.

   (ii) S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, History of Tamil Language and Literature, op. cit., p. 4.

8. M. Srinivasa Iyengar, V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar and P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar assign 500 B.C. to 500 A.D. to the Saṅgam period. See : N.K. Mangala Murugesan, The Saṅgam Age, Chennai, p. 23.

9. These references are :

(i) Nandan - AHAM, 251:5

(ii) Nandar - AHAM, 265:4

(iii) Pāḍali - KR, 75:4, AHAM, 265:5

(iv) Mōriyar - AHAM, 69:10, 251:12, 281:8, PURAM, 175:6

10. P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, History of the Tamils, New Delhi, 1983, p. 145.

11. N. K. Mangala Murugesan, op. cit., .PP. 39-40.

12. AHAM, 336:21-22; 396:16-18; NAR, 170:6-8.

13. The composer of Puṟanāṉūṟu verse 183 is called Āriyappaḍai-kaḍanda Neḍuñceḻiyaṉ.

14. Vēlvikkuḍi copper plates, verse lines 11-12 in Ten Pāṇḍiyaṉ Copper Plates, Tamil Historical Society, Chennai, 1967.

15. N. Subrahmanian, op. cit., pp. 29-40.

16. J.R. Marr does not accept Pattup-pāṭṭu as a Saṅgam work; see Eight Anthologies, cited above, p.8.

17. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, op. cit., p. 23.

18. Cited at foot note 2, p. 5-6.

19 (i) S. Vidyāṉandaṉ, Tamiḻar Sālbu, op. cit.

(ii) N. Subrahmanian, Saṅga Kāla Vāḻviyal, op. cit.

(iii) M. Shanmukam Pillai, Saṅgat Tamiḻariṉ Vaḻipāuḍugaḻum Saḍaṅgukaḻum, Chennai, 1996.

(iv) M. Shanmukam Pillai, Saṅgat Tamiḻar Vāḻviyal, Chennai, 1997.

(v) George Hart, The Poems of Ancient Tamil, op. cit.

20. The Tamil Lexicon (p.61) explains the term as a spirit-deity which causes pain and suffering. See Winslow's Tamil and English Dictionary, Madras, 1862.

21. PPA, 493

22. MK, 446.

23. AHAM,366:16.

24. AHAM, 7:4;AKN, 23:4; PAR, 11:122.

25. AHAM, 7:4.

26. PA, 19-20 (The Aṇaṅgu of the Yāzh instrument is called Mātaṅgi by Naccinārkkiniyar in his commentary on the Jīvaka-cintāmaṇi. (411, 500); see also AHAM, 161:12-13; NAR, 9:5-6; KT,50:6-7.

27. Tamil Lexicon, p: 1565. DED 2725

28. KP, 255-261.

29. NAR,359

30. AHAM, 304:1-5

31. Ibid., 32: 7-8; 162: 24-25.

32. KUR, 53: 5-7.

33. PAR, 8. 65-71.

34. AHAM, 198: 14-17.

35. NAR,34:1-5.

36. TMA, 12-41.

37. KP, 195-197.

38. MPK, 189-192.

39. AHAM,342; 1l-12.

40. KUR, 89: 4-7; NAR, 185:6-11; 192:8-11; 201:5-12; AHAM.62:12-16; 209:11-19.

41. NAR, 165:3.

42. AHAM,372:l-4

43. PURAM, 143: 1-3.

44. NAR, 165:3-5.

45. AHAM,348:2-1O.

46. KT, 52:7-10.

47. Ibid., 39: 27-29; MPK, 256-360.

48. PAD, 13:20.

49. PA,47-52.

50. TMA,223-226.

51. AHAM, 270:12; 309:4; NAR,303.3-4; MPK,395-396.

52 M. Shanmukam Pillai, op. cit., pp. 117-118.

53. PAD, 66:13-15.

54. KUR. 87: 1-2.

55. AHAM, 309: 1-6

56. NAR. 343: 4-6.

57. KT 106: 26-29.

58. AKN, 28:1; 53:1

59. NAR. 34:1; AHAM,91:4.

60. PAR, 4:67; TMP, 223.

61. AHAM, 110: 4-5.

62. TOL. 952:4.

63. AHAM, 207: I.

64. NAR, 155:5-6.

65. AHAM,370:12.

66. Ibid., 370: 9-12.

67. Ibid., 240: 8-9.

68. Ibid., 201: 1-7.

69. PURAM, 9: 10.

70. AHAM, 156: 13-16.

7I. PAT, 86-93.

72. PURAM,50: 1-8.

73. Ibid., 362:3:369:5.

74. PAD, 30: 30-44.

75. PURAM,50: 1-17.

76. AHAM, 369:6-8.

77. Ibid., 98:12; 142:20-26; 212:1-2; KUR, 184: 5-6; NAR,30I:5-6.

78. KUR, 87: 1-2.

79. PURAM,34:12.

80. Ibid., 325:10-13.

81. NAR,303:3-4.

82. PAR,18:28.

83. AHAM, 167:7-20.

84. Ibid., 287: 3-12.

85. PAT, 246-249.

86. Ibid., Naccinārkkiniyar-urai, p. 355.

M.K. Anangu vaḻankum akal āṅkan, "the big ūr in which the divinities reside in houses."

87. Ibid., 353: 354; 577-578.

88. NV,86.

89. Ibid., 36-44.

90. NAR,367: 1-6.

91. AHAM, 282: 16-18.

92. MK,631-33.

93. AKN, 70: 4-5.

94. PAD,13:15.

95. AHAM, 130:5.

96. NAR, 15: 7-8.

97. PAD, 71: 22-24.

98. SP, 9-5.22.

99. PURAM, 62:4.

100. Ibld., 62: 2-8.

101. Ibid., 359: 4-5.

102. Ibid., 369: 14-17.

103. Ibid., 370: 22-27.

104. K. Kailāsapathy, Paṇḍait Tamiḻar Vaḻivum Vaḻipāḍum, Chennai, 1966, pp. 60-84.

105. AHAM, 233:6-12.

106. PPA,457-461.

107. KT,89:8-9.

108. Ibid., 65: 16-18.

109. PAD,13-15.

110. AHAM, 122:14; 260:13; 311:4; NAR, 171:9; 255:1.

111. PURAM, 369: 14-18.

112. PPA,234-237.

113. AHAM, 365: 11-13.

114. PAT, 57.

115. AHAM, 131: 6-11.

116. Ibid., 269: 3-13.

117. PURAM, 263: 5-8.

118. PAT, 78-79.

119. AKN,352: 1-2; AHAM, 67:8-11; 131:6-12; 179:7-8; MPK,394-396.

120. AHAM,365: 1-6.

121. Ibid., 297:7.

122. PURAM,263 1-8; 306: 1-5; AHAM, 289: 1-4; MPK,394-396.

123. M. Shanmukam Pillai, op. cit., p. 144.

124. PURAM, 232: 1-6.

125. TOL, 1010:19-21

126. Tol.P. Iḷampūraṉar urai, pp. 155-159.

127. PURAM, 213, 216-223.

128. AHAM, 269: 3-13.

129. Ibid., 35, 5-10.

130. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, Saṅgam Literature: Its Cults and Cultures, Madras, 1972, pp. 2-3.

131. Tamil Lexicon, p. 3279, DED, 4979.

132. AHAM, 22:11; 118:5; 137:8; PURAM, 56:14; 259:5; AKN, 245:3; 247:3; 249:3; KUR,362:1; NAR, 34:11; 47:10; 82:4. PAD, 26:12, PAT, 37.

133. AHAM, 1:3, 59:11, 98:10, 158:16, PURAM, 16:12, 23:4, 299:6, PA, 131.

134. AHAM, 28, 5-8; 118; 4-6; 272, 1-15; KP, 107-152.

135. AHAM, 98: 8-10.

136. NAR. 288, 5-10.

137. KP,174-175.

138. PURAM,299:6.

139. NAR,34:9.

140. PAR, 5-15.

141. TOL, 1010:1-2.

142. KUR, 23:1-5.

143. NAR, 282: 1-6.

144. AHAM, 22:11; TMA, 244.

145. NAR, 51: 6-7.

146. Ibid., 268: 8-9.

147. TMA,219.

148. Ibid.,190-193; 206-208.

149. NAR, 34:8.

150. AHAM, 22: 5-12; 138: 10-13;232: II-I 2; KUR,362:1-7; NAR, 34: 8-11; 47:7-11; TMA,243.

151. NAR,47: 9-10; 51: 6--7; 322: 10-12; AHAM, 22: 8-11; 98: 18-19; 114: 1-3; 138:10-13.

152. KUR, 362: 3-5.

153. TMA, 218-249.

154. AKN, 245.2.247.2 and commentary thereon, old and modern.

155. TMA, 190-197; 205-217; MPK,318-322; NAR, 276:8-10; PURAM, 129:1-3.

156. AHAM,22: 5-12; 138: 7-13; 232: 4--15; 272: 12-19; KUR, 362: 1-7; NAR, 34: 5-1I: 47: 5-11; AKN, 241-250.

157. NAR,34: 10-11.

158. PAR, 5: 14-15.

159. PURAM, 299:6.

160. Ibid., 299: 5-6.

161. NAR, 82:4.

162. Ibid., 82: 3-4.

163. AHAM, 181: 6-7.

164. PURAM, 56:14.

165. Ibid., 14:19.

166. Ibid., 16: 12.

167. Ibid., 23: 3-5.

168. Ibid., 120: 19-21.

169. Ibid., 56:6.

170. Ibid., 23: 3-4.

171. AHAM, 345: 3-4.

172. TMA, 258.

173. KUR,218:1-4.

174. George Hart, op. cit, p. 24.

175. SP, Vēṭṭuva-vari, 9, 12, 14.

176. TMA, 259.

177. PAD, 66:12-16.

178. KUR, 218:1-2.

179. NV, 142.

180. PAD, 90: 19-21.

181. Ibid., 79: 14-18.

182. Ibid., 30:30-44

183. PURAM, 4:12; 19:16; 42:23; 56: II; 225:4; 226:6; 294:3; P URAM, 210: 8; 221 : 8; 230 :1 I; 237: 9; 238: 10; NAR, 271 :12; PAD, 13: 11; 14: 10; TMA, 257; KT, 17: 12; 103:45; 105:20; 120:9; 361:2; KUR, 197:4; 267:8; AHAM, 61:1; PAD, 51:35.

184. PURAM, 3:12; KUR, 267: 6-8.

185. Ibid.,42: 22-25; 56:11; 362:7.

186. Ibid., 227:11

187. Ibid., 230:1-16.

188. George Hart, op. cit., p. 24.

189. TMA,274.

190. PP Naccinārkkiniyar Commentary, p. 74

191. DED, 1109.

192. George Hart, op. cit., p. 27.

193. TOL, 925:2

194. TMA,267.

195. PAR, 5: 22-70;

196. PPA, 457-459; TMA, 258-259.

197. TMA, 1-11.

198. PAR, 19: 97-100.

199. AHAM, 120: 1-3.

200. PURAM, 23:3; TMA, 10--11; PAR, 5:81.

201. NAR, 34:8; TMA, 9-11; 43-44.

202. KP,51.

203. TMA, 247; PAR, 5:2; 17:49.

204. PAR, 18:26.

205. TMA,206-216.

206. AHAM, 1:3; 158: 16-17; 181:6; NAR, 225:1; PA, 131; MPK, 493; PAR, 22: 26-27. PURAM, 16:12, 23:3-4; 120:21.

207. KT, 104:13-14; 105:17-18; PAR, 5:7; 21:8-9; 21:66; KP,51-52.

208. TMA,110-111.

209. PURAM, 23:4; PAD, 11-1-6; PPA, 457-458; KUR, 1:3; KT, 27: 15-16; 93: 25-27; 104: 13-14; PAR, 5: 1-7,9:70; 14:18; 18: 3-4; 21:8, 28-29.

210. TMA, 266; PAR, 8:29; 19:36, 102-103.

211. TMA,6.

212. NAR, 82:4; TMA, 101-102; PAR, 8:69; 9:67; 14: 21-22.

213. AHAM, 149: 12-16; PURAM, 55: 17-19.

214. AHAM, 360: 6-9. This may be a forerunner of the worship of Saṅkara-Nārāyaṇa, unified deity, of later-times.

215 MPK,82-83.

216. PURAM, 55:4; KT, 1:4.

217. PURAM,56: 1-2.

218 . Ibid., 56:1,166: 1-2.

219. KT,1:2; 38:1; 150:9; PAR, 9: 4-7.

220. PURAM, 55: 4-5; 91:5.

221 Ibid., 198:9; TMA, 256.

222. PURAM, 55: 1-6.

223. Ibid., 56:1-2; KT, 103:25-27.

224 TMA, 153; KT, 38: 1-2.

225. AHAM, 181: 15-17.

226. PURAM, 166: 1-4.

227. AHAM, 181: 15-17.

228. PAR, 5: 25-30.

229. PURAM,91:4-7.

230. PURAM, 55: 1-5; KT, 2:1-8; 38:1; PAR, 5: 22-27; PAR.T.: 75-78.

231. TMA, 153-154.

232. KT, 150:20; PAR, 8:6; 11:77.

233. KT, 1: 1-12.

234. PURAM,55: 1-4; PAR, 5: 22-27; PAR.T. 1: 75-78.

235. KT, 38: 1-5.

236. PAR, 5:13.

237. KT, 101:24-26; 103: 40-46.

238. TOL, 952:1

239. KT,107:32; 123:4; PAR, 13:6; MP, 3; AHAM, 59: 5-6.

240. PURAM, 57:2;NAR, 32:1; MK, 591; KT, 105:55; PAR, 15:33; PAR.T, 8:1.

241. MP, I-3.

242. PAD, 15:39; PPA, 402.

243. PURAM,58:14-16.

244. Ibid., 56: 3-6.

245. NAR, 32: 1-2.

246. PURAM, 56:5; 58:15; PPA, 30; 402; PAR, 1: 6-7; 62; 2:52; 3:3, 4: 6-7; 13: 42-43; 15:50.

247. PAR, 1: 9-10,3:88; 4:6-8; 13: 1-4.

248. AHAM, 175: 13-16; KT, 108:55; PAR, 13: 3-4; 10.

249. PAD, 31: 7-9; PAR, 4:58; 13: 59-60.

250. PAR, 13:29.

251. Ibid., 1: 8-9; 2: 28-30.

252. PAD, 31:7; KT, 104: 9-10; PPA, 29; PAR, 1:8,36.

253. MP, I-3.

254. PAR, 2:31.

255. KT, 44: 5-7.

256. TM, 70; PAT, 291.

257. AHAM, 316:13; PURAM, 358: 5-7.

258. PPA, 402: 404; TMA, 164-165.

259. PAR, 1:6; 3:2; 4: 62-63; 13: 50-53.

260. Ibid., 2: 36-51.

261. Ibid., 3: 15-18.

262. PAD, 31: 7-9; PAR, 1: 5-11.

263. KT, 103: 75-76.

264. PPA,372-373.

265. PPA,29-31.

266. PAR,1: 1-5, PAR.T. 1: 79-80.

267. Ibid., 3: 59-60; 4: 42-48; 13: 38-40; TMA, 148-151.

268. PAR 3: 15-19.

269. PPA, 402-404; PAR, 3: 11-14, 91-94.

270. KT, 26: 3-4; 94: 33-34; 140:7.

271. PAR, 2: 31-35; 4: 22-21.

272. Ibid., 4: 10-21.

273. AHAM, 220: 5-8.

274. PURAM, 378: 18-22.

275. AHAM, 70: 13-17.

276. KT, 103: 53-55; PAR, 3: 31-32.

277. KT, 134:1.

278. PAR, 3:83, commentary of Parimēl Aḻagar on "iḍavala".

279. AHAM, 59: 3-6.

280. George Hart, op. cit., p. 271.

281. PAR, 2: 69:72.

282. PAR, 3: 25-29.

283. PAR.T. 1: 47-49.

284. PAR, 1:65; 3:11; 93: 13-44; 15:63.

285. Ibid., 1: 33-35.

286. Ibid., I: 40-41.

287. Ibid., 1:13; 2:57; 3:14; 4:65.

288. Ibid., 2: 20-27.

289. Ibid., 3:43.

290. Ibid., 2: 61-65.

291. Ibid., 2: 1-19.

292. PAR, commentary of Parimēl A̲lagar, p. 15.

293. PAR, 3:61,13: 46-47.

294. Ibid., 4: 30-36.

295. Ibid., 3: 63-70; 4:70.

296. Ibid., 3:81-2.

297. Ibid., 3:71-72.

298. Ibid., 4:30.

299. Commentary on PAR, op. cit., p. 35.

300. PAR,4:56.

301. PAR.T. I: 46-47.

302. PAR, 15: 15-16.

303. Ibid., 3:1-11.

304. PURAM, 241: 1-5.

305. Ibid., 241:3.

306. TMA,155-159.

307. PAR, 5: 51, 69; 5:58-59; 5:31; 9:2; 9:9; 9:1-4. 18:39.

308. PAR.T. 2:90-96.

309. PAR, 19: 50-52.

310. AKN,62: 1-2;

311. M. Shanmukam Pillai, op. cit, p. 20

312. NAR, 356: 3-4.

313. PAR, 3: 6-8; 27-28; 8: 3-7; TMA, 167-168.

314. PAD, 68: 12-14.

315. AHAM, 55:14; PURAM, 213: 9-10.

316. PURAM, 38: 11-15; 50: 13-17.

317. M. Shanmukam Pillai, op. cit., p. 20.

318. Ibid., p. 22.

319. KUR,83: 1-2;20l:11;NAR,65:1.

320. PURAM, 287: 10-12.

321. M. Shanmukam Pillai, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

322. PURAM, 15: 11-22.

323. Ibid., 16: Verses 125 and 367 on the same King do not indicate his sacrificial activities.

324. Ibid., 377: 5-6.

325. Ibid., 224: 4-10.

326. PAD, 21: 5-9.

327. Ibid., 70: 17-19.

328, Ibid., 74: 1-2.

329. PURAM, 99:1; 122:3 AHAM, 13: 10-11.

330. PAT, 200-204.

331. PPA,494-500.

332, AHAM, 220: 5-9.

333. PURAM, 201: 8-12.

334, Ibid., 166: 10-26.

335, PAR, 2: 61-68; Parimēlalagar's commentary, p. 8.

336. PURAM, 122: 2-3; 361: 3-5; 367: 4-5; PAD, 64: 4-6.

337, Ibid.,6: 19-20; PAD, 63:1.

338. Ibid., 9: 1-5.

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340. PURAM, 24:31-36.

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342. Ibid., 461-467.

343. Ibid., 475-487.

344. AHAM, 123: 1-4.

345. PURAM, 193: 1-4.

346. Ibid., 194: 1-7.

347. Ibid., 362: 8-10.

348. Ibid., 363: 1-16.

349. Ibid., 192: 1-13.

350. Ibid., 27: 11-14.

351. Ibid., 29: 22-24.

352. Ibid., 192:4.

353. Ibid., 194: 1-5.

354. Ibid., 165: 1.

355. Ibid., 367: 1-2.

356. Ibid., 358: 3-4.

357. Ibid., 24: 31-34.

358. MK, 779-782.

359. PURAM,56: 18-21.

360. Ibid., 367: 6-9.

361. Ibid., 360: 1-10.

362. Ibid., 367: 9-15.

363. Ibid., 214: 1-13.

364. Ibid., 182: 8-9.

365. Ibid. 190:1-12.

366. Ibid., 185: 1-6.

367. Ibid., 187: 1-4.

368. Ibid., 139: 5-6.

369. Ibid., 360: 1-9.

370. Ibid., 174: 18.

371. Ibid., 236: 1-12.

372. Ibid., 134: 1-4.

373. Ibid., 191: 1-7.

374. Ibid., 177: 19-20.

375. Ibid., 62: 16-19,287: 11-12.

376. Ibid., 93: 1-11.

377. Ibid.,74: 1-2.

378. Ibid., 239: 1-21.

THE SAṄGAM CLASSICS ON KINGSHIP AND SOCIETY

The origin of the Saṅgam poetical works is ascribable to a long period from the fourth century B.C. to the third century A.D. The poems of the Saṅgam times most probably arose in the Tamil land during the long transitional period of the end of a tribally organized society and the beginning of monarchical rule which lasted up to the third century A.D. We find that the Puṟattiṇai verses of the Saṅgam works evidence many details of rulers, subjects, and social life prevailing in Tamil Nadu in those days. The "Poruḷadhikāram" (content of poems) of the Tolkāppiyam gives a good account of the ways of living people followed in the ancient Tamil land. The Ahattiṇai verses of the Saṅgam works (based on conventions of love-poetry) also throw light on the life-style of the Tamil people of the ancient age. This paper utilizes these as source-materials for its statements.

We know that the evidence in the form of archeological excavations, numismatic finds, and epigraphs has prime importance in piecing out the history of countries. So far as the Tamil land is concerned, we do not get sufficiently rich evidence of the kind usually given the first place for historiography. However, surprisingly enough, the Saṅgam poetical works serve to fill up this lacuna, compensating the lack of other antiquarian sources. History is no longer based merely on royal dynasties and wars and their politics, but is understood to comprehend the social life of the people in its entirety-usages, beliefs, and behaviour patterns, etc. The Saṅgam works, considered from this comprehensive viewpoint, deserve to be treated as records with first-rate documentation of the history of their period. The noted historian, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, has also accepted the historical value of the Saṅgam literature.[1]

Foreign travellers to the Tamil country in the distant past have written about the flourishing trade that this region had with the Romans carried

through Egypt; these are Strabo, Pliny the Elder, Ptolemy, and the anonymous author of *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, and they mention the names of sea ports in the western and eastern sea coasts of the Tamil land in connection with the trade activities.[2] There are also references to the Tamil country's commerce with the west in the Tamil poetical works.

The "rock edicts" (inscriptions) of Emperor Aśoka mention the Tamil kings, Cōḻas, Pāṇḍiyas, Satyaputras, and Kēralaputras as his allies to whose kingdoms he sent Buddhist missionaries.[3] Recent scholarship has identified the Satyaputras in those edicts with the Adiyamāṉ-chiefs ruling Takaḍūr, Dharmapuri in Tamil Nadu.[4] A king of Kaliṅga (Orissa) by name Khāravēla prides himself in his Hathigumpha inscription (first half of the second century B.C.) on his victory over an alliance of Tamil kings who had been a scourge on his country for 113 years.[5] Inscriptional evidence thus clearly points to the existence of powerful rulers in the Tamil region even in the pre-Christian era and that their strength was forceful enough to mount invasions on enemies beyond their limits. The cumulative evidence of these facts goes to show that the Saṅgam poetical works are not mere fancies, but recordations of historical conditions meriting serious study as such.

2. KINGSHIP

The territories comprised in the Tamil land were ruled by the three kings, viz. the Cēras, Cōḻas, and Pāṇḍiyas, and chiefs of some smaller principalities; the land stretched from the Vēṅkaṭa mountain (Tirupati hills) in the north to the Kumari cape in the south, and the sea formed its boundary to the west and the east. The total area inclusive of modem Kerala is spoken of by the Saṅgam works themselves as Tamiḻagam and Tamil Nadu.[6] The rulers of this area are known by various terms as arasaṉ iṟaivaṉ, koṟṟavaṉ, kō, kōṉ, maṉṉaṉ, and vēndaṉ.

Terms on kingship and kings

The word "arasaṉ" (meaning "king") has given rise to associated

formations like arasu, arasiyal, arasavai, etc.[7] Etymologists consider arasan as the derived Tamil form of the Sanskrit rāja(n).[8] It also admits of consideration as an alternate of the Tamil word "araiyan" formed by phonetic alteration of ya>sa.

The words "irai" and "iraivan" have been used referring to the ruler of a land.[9] The Tolkāppiyam takes the word "irai" to mean king (or ruler), but in the Saṅgam poetical works, the word "iraivan" has been glossed by the clasical expositors only to mean "leader" (or head).

The word "korravan" harks back to the old Tamil word "korram" meaning "victory", and the old Tamil people bent on victory as the prime purpose of life honoured the king as "korravan,"[10] one with victory. Korram is derivable from the root "kol "meaning "kill".

Other synonyms, kō, kōn, and kōmān[11] seem to be based on the root "kō". Old Tamil poets have used the word "mannan"[12] besides "vēndu" and "vēndan" to mean king or ruler.[13] The former word "mannan" seems to have arisen from the verbal root "man" meaning "to last or endure". The latter word "vēndan" has been used for the deity of the Marudam (cultivated land) in the Tolkāppiyam, and this deity is stated to be Indra by expositors of the work.[14]

The prevalence of a multiplicity of terms for a king in the Saṅgam poetical works lends colour to believe that the institution of kingship took shape in the Tamil land even before historical times, about the third century B.C. Looking at the usage of these terms, we may see a distinction. Only the three major kings-Cēras, Cōḷas, and Pāṇḍiyas-are designated by the terrns "vēndu", "vēndan", or "vēndar"; other rulers subject to these or independently ruling, are called only by the term "mannan".

The likely origin of kingship in Tamil Nadu has been a problematic to historians and Tamil scholars. P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar[15] suggests that the seṅkōl (sceptre, a good stick indicating power), the insignia of a king, is similar to the stick (kōl) always wielded by a cowherd to keep his flocks

and herds in the jungle region (Mullai) under his control. Kōn is an alternant of kōl and means a king as well as a cowherd; and the rulership of a king with a controlling stick of power is placeable in the Mullai region.

N. Subrahmanian,[16] another historian, differs and says that only the leader of the hunting dwellers of the mountainous region (Kuriñji) may have begun kingship in Tamil Nadu. A third scholar, S. Vidyanandan,[17] is of the opinion that only the leader of the peasants of the cultivated fields (Marudam) may be credited with the commencement of the institution of rulership in the Tamil land. Out of the five regions of the Tamil land-Kuriñji, Mullai, Neydal, Pālai, and Marudam-the last mentioned region of settled residents engaged in the cultivation of fields which yield rich crops takes priority in numbers and economic prosperity; and the deity of the region is also called Vēndan, the Tamil word for a king.

Mūvēndar

The three major powerful kings ruling the Tamil land were known collectively as Mūvendar and were praised by poets. The Aśoka inscriptions have obviously mentioned the three rulers of Tamil land-Cēras, Cōlas, and Pāṇḍiyas recognizing their importance as three major rulers. Outside their empire, the antiquity of the reputation of the three kings is also brought home to us. Tolkāppiyar, the author of the ancient Tamil grammatical classic, also specifies the land of the greatly famous three rulers (kings).[18] Another poet speaks in a poem of the Puranānūru, about the three monarchs with forces having sounding drums.[19]

Divinity and emblems of kings

The poets of the Saṅgam works liken the valour and victory and the irresistible ire of kings to those of gods in their praises. For example, some poets have likened them with God Murugan.[20] The poet, Madurai Marudam Iḷanāganār, compares the king, Pāṇḍiyan Ilavantikait-tuñjiya Nan Māran, to the three-eyed God, Lord Śiva, in his poem of praises.[21] Kārikkaṇṇanār, another poet, describes the harmonious presence together

of the Cōḷa and Pāṇḍiya kings at one place as the sight of God Kṛṣṇa together with his elder brother, Baladēva, in one place.[22] There are also poems equating kings with the God of Death.[23] These comparisons make us infer that kings were conferred an aura of divinity by poets, praising them.

Tolkāppiyar specifies nine things as accompaniments of a king's authority: weapon, parasol, standard, drum, horse, elephant, chariot, symbolic flower-garland, and crown.[24] In addition to these, we find that royal symbols of seat of authority, individual seals, ornaamented pole or long stick, chosen tree as a guardian-symbol, and discus (cākra) as a token of the exercise of power, are spoken of in the Saṅgam poems.

Paḍai (sword)

This word "paḍai" in the Tolkāppiyam does not mean the army as in later usage, but only the weapon-the sword-wielded by kings of those days and which was considered responsible for a king's victory in wars. Poets have sung of these sword-earned victories.[25] A king, before starting on the siege, of an enemy fort, sends his parasol and sword to the battle area as his advance tokens.[26] After obtaining victory (with his sword) in a war, he honours his sword with a worshipful celebration called vāṇ-maṅgalam (blessing the sword's auspiciousness).[27] These details tell us clearly of the importance of the sword in war and the auspiciousness attached to it for its victory-earning power.

Kuḍai (parasol)

A king's umbrella (or parasol held over his seat) was a symbol of royal valour and just rule; it was regarded as the protector, giving "cool shade" to suffering subjects.[28] It appears that, when kings assembled in a place, the parasol of the most powerful king distinguished by his victory over others was held high, putting the umbrellas of others in the background.[29] Only the three major Tamil kings wearing royal crowns seem to have been privileged to have their parasols over their heads.

There was parasols also in temples of deities under worship. Kārikilar, a poet of the Puranāṉūru, sings that, during a king's entry into a temple, his royal parasol should be held low in veneration.[30] Before starting to fight a war, a king would send his royal umbrella to the battle field, choosing an auspicious day therefor; this custom is called kuṭai-nāṭkōl (celebration of the day of the umbrella).[31] Singing the greatness of a king in terms of praising his royal umbrella as a protector is a poetic tradition called kuḍai-nilal-marabu (custom of praise), the protective parasol's shade, in the Tolkāppiyam.[32]

Koḍi (standard or flag)

The flag was considered one of the sacred insignias of the king, which carried his chosen emblem as an imprint. The Cēra, Cōla. and Pāṇḍiya kings had the bow, the tiger, and the fish, respectively, as their emblems on their flags. There is, however, no mention of emblems imprinted on flags by the Tamil monarchs in the Saṅgam poems. Flags served to identify the affiliation of the warriors fighting in battle-fields. Mutilating or seizing flags of enemies served as signs of victories in battles. The poet Paraṇar sings praising the army of King Seṅguṭṭuvaṉ with the honorific appellation of Kaḍal pirakkōṭṭiya (who drove back the sea), which marched with the sky-touching victorious flag flying on his chariot.[33] Elephants in the army carried flags on their backs.[34] It was a tradition followed by poets to sing in praise of the royal flags of kings patronizing or favouring them. This is classified as a separate poetic situation called koḍi nilai (flag-based poetic praise) in the Tolkāppiyam.[35]

Murasu (drum)

The drum had a place of honour among royal insignia; it was believed to house a fearful deity, and blood offerings were given to it by the Tamil kings.[36] The three kings of the Tamil land had their drums; the worship of the drum by the Cēra kings is attested in a Saṅgam anthology.[37] Even as the drum was held sacred, its seat (called kaṭṭil) was considered

sacrosanct. A person who violated the sacred divinity of the drum would be put to the sword.[38] The drum was also considered just like the umbrella to be a symbol of the king's protection of his subjects. A poem in the Kalittogai praises the royal drum as sounding security (to the kingdom).[39] The seizure of the enemy's drum was considered a sign of victory in war.[40]

Kudirai (horse), yāṉai (elephant), and tēr (chariot)

These royal emblems are not much spoken of in the Saṅgam poetical works. The elephant which a king rode received good decoration; when he dismounted, the decorations were removed.[41] Next to the elephant, the horse come for attention. We learn that horses were given names by their owner-rulers. The horse of the chief, Malayamāṉ Tirumuḍik Kāri, was called Kāri; that of another chief, Valvil Ōri, was called Ōri. The chariot was used as their preferred vehicle by the rich; poets sing of the lover-hero (of love poems) as going on chariots to earn wealth, outside the limits of the Tamil land.[42] The chariots had ornamental bells on them. The king's arrival was announced to his people by the ringing of the bells on his chariot.[43]

Mālai (flower-garland)

The Tamil kings of the Saṅgam period had the custom of wearing individually distinctive flower-garlands. The Cēra kings wore palmyra flower (paṉambū) garlands while the Cōḻa monarchs had fig (ātti) garlands, and the Pāṇḍiyas had margosa flower (vēppambū) garlands, as their identifying symbols as the Tolkāppiyam indicates.[44] We gather more specifically from the poet Kōvūr Kiḻār's praise of the Cōḻa king, Neḍuṅkiḻḻi, that the Cēra wore the great palmyra's white-petalled flower and the Pāṇḍiya was the wearer of the garland of flowers of the black-branched margosa tree and that the Cōḻa's garland was of the "ār" or ātti flowers.[45]

These flower-garlands were also worn by the fighters in the battle-field as marks of their affiliation to the side they belonged. These identifying

garlands, like the emblems etched on flags, remained the same, passing from generation to generation. The chiefs of the armies and the royal elephants also wore garlands of the same flowers as their kings.[46] A chief under a bigger king wore the same flower-garland as that of his war-lord; Adiyamān Neḍumān Anji, ruler of Takaḍūr, is mentioned as wearing a palmyra flower-garland probably in token of his descent from the Cēra royal line.[47] From the Puṟanāṉūṟu, we learn that the Vēḷir-ruler, Ay-Āṇḍiraṉ, and another chief of a principality called Ēraikkōṉ, wore respectively garlands of surapunnai flowers and kāndaḷ flowers.[48]

Muḍi (crown)

In enumerating the accompaniments of kingship, the Tolkāppiyam places the royal crown at the end. According to an old custom, the privilege of wearing the crown belonged only to the three major kings of the Tamil land. No evidence is available in the Saṅgam literature of chiefs of small principalities or minor kings wearing crowns of royal status . There is also no mention of the celebration of wearing a crown by the three major kings in the Tolkāppiyam and other Saṅgam works.

The word "vēndaṉ" in the term "Mūvēndar" (three kings) usually used for the kings may have arisen from the base vēy found in all Dravidian languages meaning knitting a roof together or wearing a garland; for example, a popular poem of moral maxims begins" Koṉṟai-vēndaṉ" (meaning: wearing or spreading the garland of konṟai flowers).[49] The verbal nouns "vēyṉtāṉ" or "vēyntōṉ" may have given, rise to the word, "Vēṉdaṉ" with the loss of the medial-y-.

The fourth decade of Padiṟṟup-pattu is composed in honour of King Kaḷaṅkāyk-kaṇṇi Nārmuḍiccēral. This appellation, as explained by the old expositor of the text, is indicative of the king's coronation with "kaḷaṅkāy" flowers and thread stringing them into the shape of a crown in the absence of other suitable flowers and a crown.[50] In another context, this work speaks of a garland of seven crowns (eḻumuḍi-āṟam) worn by

Cēra kings;[51] and this has been interpreted by the old expositor of the text to mean: the king wearing the garland made of seven crowns.[52] It appears that the garland was symbolic of the king's victory over seven rulers-the two major kings of the Cōla and Pāṇḍiya lines and five other Vēḷir-chiefs.

N. Subrahmanian interprets the word "muḍi" for crown as muḍiccu meaning "knot" and arrives at the meaning: the garland with seven knots.[53] The beginning of a king's reign is reckoned with his coronation as is seen from later records of his rule. A monarch's wearing the crown carries with it the implication of his assumption of rulership, and the author of the Tolkāppiyam would seem to have recognized this by placing the crown (muḍi) at the end of his enumeration of royal insignia.

Kaṭṭil (seat of power)

This word refers to the seat-sitting on which a king exercised his rule. This seat is said to have been made out of the tusk of the state elephant of a defeated enemy (king) in a verse of the Padiṟṟup-pattu.[54] The verse also ascribes a divinity to the seat calling it the possessor of a fearful spirit (aṇaṅgu). We find that the word "ariyaṇai" (lion-throne), much used for the king's seat, does not find a place in the Saṅgam literature. Exercising his royal authority, the king always sat on his kaṭṭil in the court hall. It is not clear from the Saṅgam works whether he sat in the court with his queen on his side. In the Silappadhikāram of the post-Saṅgam times, the Pāṇḍiya king is stated to have sat on his lion-throne with his honoured queen.[55]

Poṟi (seal-emblem)

There were individual seals with distinctive emblems for the three major kings-the Cēras, Cōlas, and Pāṇḍiyas in the Saṅgam age. It has been stated earlier that the seals of the three kings-bow, tiger, and fish, respectively-were imprinted on their seals. These seals were also fixed on all the goods of the royalty and the communications issued by the king. We learn that the tiger-seal of the Cōḷa king was fixed on all the

articles meant for export and import in the port-town of Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṉam.[56] This seal was also fixed on the doors of the fort of this port-town.[57] Smaller kings of principalities utilized the seals of their over-lords. Cōḻiya Ēṉādi Malayamāṉ, a ruler under the Cōḻa king's suzerainty, had the tiger emblem of his over-lord fixed on his fort -doors.[58]

Kōl (sceptre in the form of a stick)

The kōl (royal stick) has prime importance among the insignia of a king. It is not simply a stick, but a symbol of royal rule. The bearer of the kōl is called kōn or kō, the terms used for kings. We find that this stick had māṉtric associations in its several usages. Besides kings, minstrels, dancers, sooth-sayers, and the like, and also roaming performers carried small sticks in their hands with white metallic edges at their ends made of fully dried up bamboos cut for the purpose. The sticks with worked-up edges are called small sticks with white edges,[59] "little pointed sticks", and "little, curved, pointed sticks".[60]

In the Saṅgam poems, the poets, referring to the peripatetic performers, highlight also the kōls held in their hands. The Ahanāṉūṟu verse speaks of the sooth-sayer with the pointed stick singing about the hill with peaks of honey matured.[61] These references indicating the incantatory value of the hand-held kōl may lead us to infer that the king's kōl held in his hand was invested with divinity, as a sign of his divinity-endowed might.

Today also the surviving sooth-saying gypsy may be seen to carry a small stick and begins her predictions only after revolving her wand and propitiating her deity with her song. The king's kōl, his sceptre, was praised as seṅkōl-straight, righteous rule without curve, indicating absence of misrule, if it was conducted justly without bending one side or the other. The Tamil kings were mostly seṅkōl rulers, and we hear of very few tyrannical ones like Naṉṉaṉ.[62] The Tamil poets avoided singing about such tyrannical rulers, and this is a feature of the ancient age evoking our surprise today.

Kaḍimaram (guardian tree)

A tree regarded as a chosen symbolic guardian formed an important item of the insignia of kingship in the Saṅgam period. All ruling dynasties had their protective trees. N. Subrahmanian associates this tree with totemic symbol.[63] It was considered to be a sacred source of protective strength to the king or chief and his peoples, who watched over it dutifully calling it (kāval-maram) "sentinel-tree" whose presence promotes their security in a divine way. Any harm to the tree was considered harm to the country itself. If an invading ruler cut and felled the sentinel tree, it was equal to the conquest of its adopted master.

The chief who ruled Mōkūr, Pa̱laiyaṉ by name, had the Vēmbu (margosa) as his guardian tree, and King Cēraṉ Seṅguṭṭuvaṉ cut it down to pieces.[64] It was considered a shame for a ruler to be unable to prevent the destruction of his kāval-maram by an enemy,[65] and the victor tying his state elephant to the guardian tree of his defeated enemy.[66] This tree, cut down by a victor-ruler, was also sometimes used as wood for making his war-drum.[67] There were examples of poets who tied the elephants they had received as presents from earlier patrons to the guardian trees of later patrons who failed to treat them with honour.[68]

Ā̱li (cakra or wheel of ruling authority)

The king's power or authority exercising rule over the land, an abstract symbol, was concretized as a discus, a cakra, a revolving wheel. The cakra symbol of royal power was used throughout India. Just as a potter shapes the earth into the forms he wishes, even so the king shapes his rule to benefit his subjects in the way he likes.[69] Poets have praised the kings, drawing attention to the ways of exercising authority, their wielding the wheel of power.[70]

It is also noteworthy here that the cakra symbol of protection is associated with the great God of protection, Tirumāl in mythology. The Tamil people also considered the ruler as the soul of the land[71] as he was

supposed to have derived his authority from divine sources. George Hart says that this position is different from that in North India where. according to him, the king gets his divine power through the priests of his court.[72] The custom of the king swearing oaths after touching the feet of holy men in those days may probably support Hart's suggestion.[73]

Royal succession

Kingship in the Saṅgam age went by hereditary descent from the father to the son. The "padigams" post fixed to each decade of the Padiṟṟup-pattu show clearly the genealogical descent of kingship. The right of the son to succeed to his father's rule was called tāyam.[74] The Cōḻa king, Karikāl Peruvaḷattān, is stated to have succeeded to the rule of his kingdom by this right as stated in the two poems, Paṭṭinap-pālai and Porunar-āṟruppaḍai included in the Pattup-pāṭṭu collection.[75]

We find descriptions of disputes about royal succession among members of a family in the Saṅgam poetical works. The sons of Kōpperuñ Cōlan tried to rebel against their father and seize the throne even when he was alive. Poet Eyiṟṟiyanār advised the king to surrender his royalty with a liberal attitude to his children.[76] It happened also that the younger son in a royal family tried to drive away his elder brother and seize the throne for himself. The colophon to a Puṟanānāru verse states that the younger brother called Iḷaṅkumaṇan seized his elder's throne and made him escape to the forest.[77]

There seems to have been no delimitation of the requirements befitting the assumption of the throne by a claimant. The examples of Karikālan and Neḍuñceḻiyan (the victor of Talaiyālaṅkānam) assuming kingship by inheritance shows the prevalence of father-son right of succession. The poem Paṭṭinap-pālai[78] tells us that Karikālan, the Cōḻa prince, was imprisoned by his enemies in young age and that he escaped from the prison and conquered his foes in fighting and assumed the throne. From the verse of Māṅguḍi Marudānar, praising Neḍuñceḻiyan, the Pāṇḍiyan

victor of the battle of Talaiyālaṅkāṉam, we learn that he ascended the throne even at an early age.[79] There were fights in royal families between co-partners (dāyādis) claiming succession to the throne. A Puṟanāṉūṟu verse speaks of such a fight between Nalaṅkiḷḷi and Neḍuṅkiḷḷi, sons of the same father.[80] We have also evidence of some kings expelling likely successors to their thrones for one reason or other.

A Cōḷa king, Tiṭṭaṉ, expelled his son, Perunaṟkiḷḷi, from his kingdom according to a Puṟanāṉūṟu verse.[81] We find in the Saṅgam literature kings who face defeat in battle, feeling ashamed and giving up their lives as expiation. The Cēra king, Peruñcēral Irumboṟai, defeated by the Cōḷa king, Karikālaṉ, ashamed of his defeat, fasted unto death sitting and facing the northern direction (a custom called vaḍakkiruttal). The Cōḷa king, Kōpperuñ Cōḷaṉ, sat facing the north and gave up his life according to his friends' advice, when his sons took to fighting against him. The Cēra king, Kaṇaikkāi Irumboṟai, when imprisoned by his victor gave up his life unable to put up with the graceless treatment inflicted on him by the prison-guards.[82]

This practice of vaḍakkiruttal (corresponding to the Northern custom of prāyōpaveśa) is a form of penance, self-imposed in unbearable situations by affected people facing north and vowing to fast unto death. The location of the cremation ghat to the north of villages in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu is perhaps linkable with this ancient practice. There seems to have been no interval between one ruler and his successor, and the Saṅgam works do not refer to any alternative arrangement in the absence of kings. The soul of a kingdom was the king, according to the Tamil people's belief, and probably the thought of a kingless land did not occur to them!

The King's assembly or court

The term "arasavai", also called "vēttavai", has as its second element the word "avai", meaning "a place of assembly of people". We see the

usage of this word in several contexts: "avai irunda perumpodiyil" (the large common place where people assembled) in the Maduraik-Kāñci, "Mōhūr avaiyagam" (the assembly of the Chief of Mōhūr) in the same poem (508-509). Poruṉar Āṟṟuppadai speaks of the entry of the Cōla King Karikālaṉ into an assembly of elders to hear the dispute between two parties.[83] The king's assembly (equal to his court) was called vēttavai.[84] If the assembly was convened in the mornings, it was called nāḷavai, nāṉ-makiḻ-irukkai, nāṉ-makiḻ.-makiḻ (day-assembly, pleasurable/daily sittings, daily pleasing pleasure).[85]

If the king used to sit as the head of the gathering, then it was labelled "pleasurable" as it provided happiness to the members. The poets and other performers of arts seeking the patronage of the king joined in the gathering. Some Tamil kings were themselves poets and connoisseur of the arts, and we may safely assume that there were, among other things, discussions based on literature and the associated arts in the gatherings.

There are references in other poems like Malaipaḍu Kaḍām (included in the Pattup-pāṭṭu collection) to truthful and good men (assisting the king), "kāviti title-holders," minstrels of noble behaviour, "the four groups (of counsellors) who excelled", and "advisers (suṟṟam) free of harshness". These make it appear that there were helpers and advisers to the king.[86] Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar interprets these references as pertaining to five counselling groups (aimperuṅkuḻu) which is inappropriate as the term applies to the later times of the rise of the Silappadhikāram.

The king in the Saṅgam works emerges as the centre of the state; it is not known whether any institutional arrangement existed to advise the king on his administration. However, we may safely assume that people close to him offered him well-meaning counsel from time to time. There is no means of knowing whether they were authorized to offer advice to the ruler. We find poets giving counsel to the king when opportunities arose. Poet Pisirāndaiyār pointed to the levy of excessive tax on land revenue by a Pāṇḍiyaṉ king and counselled him to show moderation.[87] Another

poet pleaded before the Pāṇḍiyaṉ king to provide irrigation facilities in his land.[88] When there was famine, a poet argued with the Cōḻa king, requesting the return of land revenue to the suffering peasants.[89]

When a Cōḻa king was planning to get the children of an enemy king killed by elephants, Kōvūr Kiḻār, a poet, appraised the ruler of his cruelty to innocent children and made him give up the attempt,[90] The same poet saved another of his fraternity named Iḷandattaṉ charged as a spy and visited with the punishment of death.[91] These instances highlight the unwritten convention that the excellence of kingship rests on the path of virtue.[92]

LIMBS AND INSTITUTIONS OF MONARCHICAL RULE

The Saṅgam works do not enable us to reconstruct a clear picture of the institutions functioning as accessory parts of a king's rule in the manner of the Tirukkuṟaḷ of later times, or the Artha-śāstra of Kauṭilya. We can only piece together some descriptive details.

Amaiccar (ministers)

The word "amaicciyaṉ" finds a place in a padigam of the Padiṟṟup-pattu anthology. Maiyūr Kiḻān, inferred to be a Veḷḷaḷaṉ from his name,[93] worked as minister to a Cēra king. Ministers are referred to as suṟṟam (those surrounding the kings) in the Perumpāṇāṟṟup-paḍai.[94] The duty of a minister (amaiccar) is to offer advice to his king, says the Kalittogai.[95] We understand that kings honoured their Ministers with the title" kāviti"; they were so-called as they were noble persons according to the Maduraik-Kāñci.[96]

Tūdar (messenger)

The "messenger" is an invariable appurtenance of kingship, and the famous Tirukkuṟaḷ has allotted a separate chapter for the elaboration of this "limb" of monarchical rule. Messengers go as representatives of their king to other royal courts and appraise the latter of the message they

carry with them and function effectively on behalf of their ruler. The Tolkāppiyam says that the duty of messengership belonged to andaṇar of the higher caste.[97] A verse of the Puṟanāṉūṟu says that a king's messenger went to the meeting places of people and addressed them with requests to come to the battle field, thus gathering support for his ruler.[98]

We find that the poetess, Auvaiyār, acted as a messenger on behalf of her patron, Adiyamāṉ Neḍumāṉ Añji, and went to the court of Toṇḍaimāṉ Iḷandiraiyaṉ and tried to prevent the rise of a fight between them with her persuasive speech in the role she assumed.[99] Another poet, Kōvūr Kiḻār took upon himself the duties of a messenger when rival claimants to the throne in a Cōḻa royal family, Nalaṅkiḷḷi and Neḍuṅkiḷḷi by name, fought between themselves. He laboured with his soothing counsel to bring peace between them, and it is clear from the verses of the Puṟanāṉūṟu that he excelled even a professional messenger in performing the task he undertook.[100]

Oṟṟu (espionage)

The role of spies among the auxiliary aides of the royal rule was indispensable. The function of spying is different from that of a messenger. The latter were public functionaries shown respect in the countries they went to; but spies were secret news gatherers in other countries working unknown to the authorities there; if they were caught in their hidden activities in the alien countries, they would be put to death.

We learn a few details about the old espionage system in the Tolkāppiyam and other Saṅgam works. In Tamil Nadu, the beginning of a war was heralded by the invading kings lifting cattle of the enemy and the latter's attempt to recover the seizures. Spies played an important part in reporting necessary intelligence to their sides in these skirmishes; this intelligence-gathering is called "vēy"' in the Tolkāppiyam;[101] and this is an old Tamil word, found with cognates in the other Dravidian languages [102] conveying the meaning of getting intelligence or spying.

Another old word with the same meaning[103] "orru" is still current in Tamil and Malayalam[104] languages. The expositor, Iḷampūraṇar,[105] explains the meaning of the word "vēy" as secret gathering of intelligence in an alien land by spies and their assistance to armies on their side with such news, remaining in the same place. The kings of the Saṅgam age made use of the services of spies, and this is clear from a verse in the Puram collection[106] stating that a Cōḷa king, Neḍuṅkiḷḷi, ordered the killing of a poet named Iḷandattaṉ under the impression that he was a spy. Poet Kōvūr Kiḻār took upon himself to convince the king that he was no spy and saved his life.[107] This verse also tells us that spies, when caught by alien kings, were condemned to death.

Purōhitar-āsāṉ (priest-preceptor)

We find in the Saṅgam poems the great reverence the Tamil kings cherished for the andaṇar (Brahmins). However, we do not have direct evidence in them for the inclusion of a purōhit or "āsāṉ" in their ministerial group. The padigams to the decades of the Padiṟṟup-pattu give room for us to suppose their presence; but the post-scripts matter, being of a later origin, prevents us from a definite conclusion. The word "purōhitar" appears as "purōsu" in the padigams,[108] a usage also found in the expositions of Naccinārkkiniyar and Sēṉāvaraiyar for superior tiṇai (masculine gender noun forms).[109] The padigam to the third decade of the Padiṟṟup-pattu tells us that Neḍumbhāratāyaṉār sat as the purōhitar of the council of the Cēra king, Palyāṉaic-celkeḻu-Kuṭṭuvaṉ. The name "Bhāratāyāṉār" indicates the birth of the person in the Bharadvaja-gōtra. The padigam informs us that, when this "purōhitar" renounced wordly life and went to the forest to lead a life of penance there, the king followed him into the forest to do penance likewise.

Kaṇi and Nāḻigaik-kaṇakkar (astrologers and time-monitors)

As there was widespread belief in auspicious hours and good omens in the Saṅgam period, it is probable that kaṇis (astrologers) who divined

by their calculations good and bad hours suitable for particular actions must have had a place in the king's council. The kings acted on the advice of the kaṇis, though the texts of extant poetical works do not give us information in this respect. Those who monitored the hours passing by had a place in the king's council according to a reference in the poem, Mullaip-pāṭṭu.

These people reckdoned the passage of the hours by watching the water falling in drops of equal size from a vessel full of the liquid and measuring the efflux of time by measuring the drop-falls. They were called reckoners of the hours (nāḻigaik-kaṇakkar), and the water-vessel used by them was known as "kaṉṉal".[110] When the king was in a war-camp during a battle, the reckoners of time continued even in the midnight to inform him of the good hour likely to promote his victory, as they determined it from the falling water-drops from the water vessel.[111]

Uḷai Irundār (by-standers)

In addition to the royal counsellors described above there were others doing tasks assigned to them by the king. The Tirukkuṟaḷ calls them "uḻai-irundār".[112] The Tolkāppiyam calls employees appointed to wake up kings in the mornings singing his praises as "sūdar".[113] The Maduraik-Kāñci calls these persons 'ahavar.'[114] We learn that these persons would sing songs of praise addressing (ahavi) the king as well as his ancestors, waking up the ruler. There must have been official writers-indentors of the king's orders etched on palm-leaves used as paper in those days. The Kalittogai tells us that palm-leaves recording the king's orders had their ends well tied up and sealed.[115]

We gather that there were practitioners of the art of humour who used to entertain him with their diverting speech.[116] The king was accompanied by maids serving him in places to which he went; we get reference in the Mullaip-pāṭṭu to maids-in-attendance on the king in his war-camp.[117] They

filled the lamps in the war-camp with oil and kept them burning throughout the night. We learn from many verses that in royal palaces servant maids served their kings with wine imported from Rome in beautiful wine-cups.[118] Outside the bed-chamber of the king, dumb Roman (Yavaṉa) soldiers of great physical strength kept watch.[119]

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE RULER

The three major kings of the Tamil land ruled only from cities as their capitals. We do not have evidence of how their rule was carried out at their capital towns like Madurai. Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṉam, and Vañci. No poetical or other works have come down to us about the set-up of the government prevailing in the Saṅgam period on the major cities of the Tamil country like the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya, which describes in detail the administration that prevailed in Pāḍaliputra, the capital city.

Ūrgaḷ (Villages and towns and other settlements)

There was no recognizable well-knit area of rule under the kings of the Saṅgam days, as incessant skirmishes between rulers changed the boundaries of territories. But in the capital town and its surroundings, the king's sway was exercised directly with relative stability. He had ruling connections with frontier areas of his kingdom to augment his revenue and protect the people from outside attackers indulging in violations of peace. In times of peace, the frontier areas were left to look after themselves. With a sort of self government, we may say that this self-rule provided a nucleus for the development of the well-known self-government set-ups in villages like Uttiramerūr and Māṉūr at a later stage.

The ūr of the old Tamil land is not simply the village. It indicated settlements of residents in the towns or villages. Towns like Madurai, Vañci, and Uṟaiyūr were all ūrs, but their size entitled them to be called pērūrs (big ūrs). The word "nagar" (now used for these big places of settlement) meant the king's palace or dwellings of the rich. A place with people living together was called" cēri"; this could be attached to an ūr at

its peripheral area when it was known as "puṟañcēri" (outside settlement of smaller groups).

Each ūr had its places meant for common gatherings of its people; these were known by different names like "maṉṟam", "podiyil", "ambalam". From the Saṅgam poems we gather that a maṉṟam was an open ground without any building and that the people of the village or other small town assembled under the shade of a tree and paid obeisance to the deity they considered to be resident in the trees. Newcomers to the ūr used to stay in the open ground of the maṉṟam.

Podiyil seems to have been a place with a building in it, as there is a reference to its having figures (of deities) portrayed beautifully on its walls (eḻtu-eḻil-ambalam). Poets have sung that the building in the podiyil was in ruins as residents of the ūrs had to leave their places with the unsettling effects of wars taking place in them. Also, newcomers stayed in the building; and women captured in wars went to the podiyil after bathing in mornings and washed its pial (platform) mixing fresh cowdung with water; in the evenings they lit lamps and prayed before the deity believed to be resident there.[120]

We may guess that in the maṉṟam and the podiyil, i.e. common open spaces, the elders of villages and smaller towns must have met to discuss matters of common interest to them. It appears that the distribution and the feasting (with toddy) which victors capturing enemy's cattle in their raids, arranged, took place in the maṉṟams. The Tolkāppiyam calls them "pātīḍu" and "uṇḍāṭṭu"[121] and these are glossed by the commentator, Iḷampūraṇar, citing some verses as examples. These support the inference of the background of the activities at the open spaces of maṉṟams.

There were sentinels watching over ūrs, assisted by their watchful dogs. They went frequently round the streets with lamps in their hands.[122] Villages and towns were often in ruins and maṉṟams remained deserted.[123]

The tanks in villages were protected (from being polluted) by watchmen,[124] probably arranged by the people themselves. Wealthy men had their residences guarded by watchmen even as they do today. Cultivated fields and areas of crops were also guarded by men on sentinel duties.[125]

Pērūrgaḷ (towns of bigger size)

There were broad roads in big towns where kings resided, and also centres of trade and commerce were located. Travellers on the roads were subject at times to raids by robbers.[126] Merchants carried their goods on highways for sale in different places, and there were guards stationed at various spots to prevent raiders plundering the merchandise on its way. Officials collecting the excise duties imposed by the king also functioned in the highways.[127] Since the roadways had irregular elevations and depressions, merchants carrried repair equipments and spares with them to overcome breakdowns on the way. [128] There were no sign-boards indicating directions and destinations in those days. We understand that those ,who went along mountain ways left marks of identification of the route for helping others corning after them. [129]

The big town of Madurai had broad streets, which were swept with brooms by workers engaged on cleaning duties both in morning and evening.[130] The layout of this city has been described briefly in the Saṅgam work, Paripāḍal. It was like a lotus-flower with the king's palace as its centre like the flower's inner bud. Streets spread around the palace like flower's petals. People lived around the king's residence in the city, which woke up to the chanting of the Vēdas by andaṉar in the mornings. Those seeking royal patronage lived in the city's outkirts.[131]

A description of the king's palace is given in the Saṅgam work, Neḍunalvāḍai. Men learned in architectural works laid the foundation for building the palace on an auspicious day. The gopuram at the entrance of the palace was tall and lofty like a mountain. The doorway of the palace

had on its top the figure of Goddess Lakṣmī seated with two she-elephants on either side of her, bearing Seṅkaḻunīr-flowers. Flags fluttered on the palace walls; towered gateways were made high, fit for elephants to pass through them.[132]

The luxurious houses of the rich are spoken of in the Paṭṭiṉap-pālai.[133] The women living in the prosperous houses of merchants used to change their dresses according to the changing hours of the day; they were engaged in song and dance.[134] The houses of fisher-folk were marked by simplicity; fish-nets were spread out for drying in the yards of their dwellings.[135]

Houses were built with burnt bricks.[136] The Cōḻa king's palace was built with these bricks and coated over with white lime mortar.[137] There were fish-shaped pipes fixed in storeys of house to drain off rain-water.[138] Cross-bars enabled doors to be easily opened and closed; they also secured the doors fast to their frames.[139] The floors of the dwellings of Brahmins were swept with cow-dung-mixed-water; they reared cows in their houses and had sheds for keeping them. Parrots were reared in their houses, and they used to repeat the Vēdic sounds they had heard from their masters. Dogs and domestic fowl were taboo in their houses.[140]

Wells sunk with burnt earthen rings were adjuncts of houses.[141] There were other wells in peripheral places of ūrs providing water for cows. Wells provided water for domestic consumption. Those meant for supplying water to cows are mentioned in several places in the Saṅgam works,[142] and this shows that attention was paid to the maintenance of cows in that age.

4. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

The Tamil people of pre-historic times must have lived in communes, and engaged in physical labour to meet their life's necessities. When they learnt to domesticate cattle and use iron equipment, they progressed to tribal life. In the tribal stage, there were inter tribal fights, and the leader of

the victorious tribe became the accepted leader of all the tribes paving the way for the evolution of kingship in the same manner as it took place all over the world.

After the formation of kingships, increased incomes became necessary for meeting expenses of wars. This led to the imposition of taxes on cultivated land, and when the excess products were moved for sale outside the kingdom, excise duties were levied. Social organization with procedures of behaviour shaped itself ensuring the monarchical set-up and affording security at large to the people. Offenders against the laws of social organization were tried in courts, which came into being for meting out justice and punishment to wrong-doers.

Pōrgaḷ (wars)

The Tamil people, judging from their ancient Saṅgam literature, viewed engagement in wars as a necessity in their age. We may say that kingship arose in the Tamil land out of the frequent fights for supremacy between rival tribal groups. The Tolkāppiyam in its chapter on Puṟattiṇai reflects the conditions of the rise of kingdoms with frequent wars in the Tamil country. Preceding wars, there were cattle raids initiated by kings setting their frontier-area-residents of communities on such raids and seizing herds of cow's from the enemy territory. This initial campaign was called veṭcip-pōr.[143]

We see here the old conditions in which cows were considered the wealth of a kingdom and that their seizure could break the back of the economy of an enemy territory. After veṭci raid, the king's direct entry into the war with his forces took place; and this fight called vañci, according to the Tolkāppiyam,[144] was waged out of ambition for acquiring territory. A king's entry into the inner areas of his enemy's territory followed by his surrounding the latter's strong forts and fighting the foe was called uḻiñai, a term indicating both the siege of the fort and the victory of its seizure.[145]

This kind of severely fought out war required good previous preparations. Before undertaking this war, the king would send his parasol and sword, emblems of royal power, with his army to the field of the siege on an auspicious day.[146] When !he besieged king, repulsing the attack on his fort, comes out to fight out his opponent in the open area, then it is called tumbai.[147] Victory in this open fighting between the armies of the two opponent kings is called vāhai.[148] The warriors engaged in these battles wore flower garlands betokening the stages of the wars (like vañci, uḻiñai, and tumbai), as also the official symbolic flower garlands of their kings used for their state purposes.

Reason for wars

The ambitious desire for adding more land to one's territory was a basic reason for wars between kings.[149] The Tamil kings cherished the ambition to bring the whole world under their rule.[150] They did not accept the view that the world belonged as a common possession to all, and their restlessness in this regard promoted wars.[151] The victorious king received approbation as the hero "eating" (enjoying) another's land.[152] The kings felt that the extent of their territory was little and were swayed by a compulsion that it must be augmented in every way.[153]

We learn that, when kings were victorious, they sought brides from tribal chiefs; and the latter with a sense of pride in their ancient heroic community heritage refused to oblige the upstarts with marital alliances and that these led to attacks and skirmishes. These have been described under the section of the Puṟanāṉūṟu anthology entitled makaṭpāṟ-kāñci makaṉ--maṟuttal, i.e. refusal to give daughters as brides.[154]

Pāri of the Vēḷir lineage refused to give his daughters in marriage; and when the three major kings of the Tamil land sought them, they angrily besieged his mountain principality called Parambu, and failing to win over him by straight warfare killed him by trickery. The Puṟanāṉūṟu verses, 109-111, by Kapilar, the poet-friend of the chief, speak clearly of Pāri's refusal to yield to the demand of the three kings.

We find several other verses referring to the pathetic spoils faced by smaller chieftains, who, proud of their ancestry, refused marriage alliances with the "newly risen kings", considered unworthy by those of older respectability.[155] As the kings had an itch for territory acquisition, we may doubt whether they used the request for brides as an excuse for a fight to annex more areas to their rule. The causes for promoting incessant wars in the Tamil land are thus the natural pugnacity of the kings coupled with their demands for brides.

Paḍaikaḷ (armies)

It has been mentioned under the possessions of royal insignia that the Tamil kings' armies had four fighting sections with elephants, horses, chariots, and infantry men, respectively. In tumbai battles where the besieged king came out and fought his invader, the sections with elephants and horses took prominent parts. The elephant force besieged forts and battered their doors, and threw off the cross-bar logs blocking them, allowing easy entry of infantry men inside; they also destroyed the threatening obstacles on the fort walls.[156]

The Saṅgam poems speak of equestrian exploits in several fights.[157] The chariots seem to have been chiefly used by kings. The Tolkāppiyam mentions a kuravai dance of a victorious king in the front and back of the chariot ridden by the defeated enemy-king.[158] The commentators of this text, Iḷampūraṉar and Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, cite verses from the Saṅgam literature as illustrations of this act.[159]

The infantry force of a king was of first rate importance in ancient wars. The Padiṟṟup-pattu and the Puṟanāṉūṟu speak highly of the armies of infantry men trained by the kings.[160] The kings themselves functioned as leaders and commanders at the head of their armies. Their officials recruited soldiers for the armies before wars.[161] The recruited men were given training.[162] The untrained force unused in wars was called "virgin army".[163] The weapons of war were fashioned by blacksmiths in their

forges.[164] They were kept in the storage sheds for war weapons in well-oiled, bright condition. The weapons and implements of war in a broken and disfigured condition were repaired in the workshops of smiths.[165]

The Tamil kings, going long distances invading other territories with their armies, stayed in military camps. We have accounts of such camps in the Mullaip-pāṭṭu and the Neḍunalvāḍai.[166] The latter work tells us of the king-commander meeting heroic soldiers of the camp wounded in the battle and offering them words of comfort. Backing out and runnning away from a battle was a disgrace, and the Puṟanāṉūṟu verses in the mūdiṉ-mullai situation (of praising heroism) tell us of the ideal heroism cherished by the Tamil commuunity.[167] Even if a lance or arrow hit a warrior in combat on his chest and pierced to his back, the kings regarded it as running disgracefully from the fight and gave up their lives fasting unto death, sitting in the northern direction.[168] Giving up one's life in the cause of the king was considered a duty for an individual.[169] To die fighting in a war was esteemed by the Tamil people as a privilege.[170]

There is no specific reference to the wages, if any, paid to men in the king's army. There were people wholly engaged in fighting wars in their life time, who have been aptly described by a Saṅgam poet "as people living by their sword". [171] The warriors who lived on the support of their physical might as their capital appear to have functioned under a leader; and these leaders seem to have changed their affiliations from time to time. The Puṟanāṉūṟu verses show clearly that Malaiyamāṉ Tirumuḍik Kāri, one of the famous seven magnificent patrons and a Vēḷir chief, served at different times as a helper of the armies of each of the three major kings of the Tamil land. He assisted the Cōḷa king, Rājasūyam-vēṭṭa Perunaṟkiḷḷi in his fight with the Cēra king, Māntarañ-Cēral Irumboṟai; on another occasion, he joined with the Cēra king[172] in his fight against the chief, Adiyamāṉ. Malayamāṉ's action in modern terms amounts to that of a mercenary commander.

We understand that the king gave presents to warriors joining in battles even before the commencement of the fighting; this is termed" mārāyam" in the Tolkāppiyam.[173], The king also gave lands as gifts to warriors who scored victories in wars and to the families of deceaed heroic fighters; these are called taṉṉaḍai (cultivated fields), and were obviously fertile lands yielding good income.[174]

Besides the benefactions mentioned above, the warriors were also given a share in the booty of war captured from enemies. The warriors who seized herds of cows from the enemy territory shared the booty between themselves in a function called pātīḍu (partition) in the Tolkāppiyam. Poets have sung in praise of victorious kings who plundered the villages and towns of the conquered land and set them on fire as well. The plunder-praise came under a verse-situation termed maḻapula-vañci (attacks by winning warriors); the praise of setting fire in enemy areas came under the verse-situation of koṟṟa-vaḷḷai (folk-song of victory),[175] We may assume that the spoils of war captured by plunder and burning were distributed to the fighters of the winning side in the battle field itself. It will be clear that those taking to fighting in wars as their profession were well recompensed and that this circumstance might perhaps have promoted the ideal of sacrificing one's life for a king's victory.

A victorious king's post-war actions

A victorious king set fire to the land of his defeated enemy destroying it wholesale, and poets praise the king's flower garland appearing faded in the glare of the fire raging in the conquered areas. In addition to the burning, destruction of water-sources of the enemy's land took place. The fertile yielding fields of the enemy area were got ploughed and sowed with veḷḷerukku and kōḷḷu plants (of no worth) as a punitive measure.[176]

The defeated king was treated insultingly with his "guardian symbol tree" cut down to pieces. The threads for tying the cut pieces of the tree to the vehicle carrying them were made of the hair of the women of the

enemy's side captured in the war. The defeated kings were captured and imprisoned by the victors in his land. We read of the Cēra king, Māntarañ Cēral Irumboṟai, who was defeated by a Pāṇḍiya king and put in prison; another Cēra king, Kaṇaikkāl Irumboṟai, was defated by a Cōḻa king and put in prison. Captured women were sent to do temple services in the lands of the victors.

We read that a chieftain named Mūvaṉ defeated by a Cēra king had his sharp teeth pulled out of his mouth and that these were fixed by the winner on the doors of the front of the Toṇḍi port as mementos.[177] The golden crown of the defeated king was melted down and shaped into bracelets, and were worn on the legs of the victors; also, the guardian tree of the defeated enemy was cut down and the wood-pieces were utilized for making a royal drum for the conqueror.[178]

The practices of war prevailing in the Saṅgam period may be regrettable from today's viewpoint, but they were characteristics of the very old pre-historic era in which societies throughout the world delighted in activities similar to those of the Tamil people. It was an ancient heroic age which focused on victory in war and bravery in fighting as the all-embracing ideal of men, not minding cruelty as the means to achieve the ends desired. It is inappropriate to judge the poesy of the heroic age from the standards of evolved justice of later days.

REVENUE TO THE RULER

The kings of the Saṅgam days had revenue coming in from several sources. There was a tax on land, and officers for collecting it were appointed by the king. The victors levied a tribute called tiṟai from the defeated rulers. Articles produced inside the kingdom were charged to an excise duty called "ulgu". A king's revenue included the booty he captured in his victorious fights. The word tor a tax was "iṟai" in those days. The later word "vari" for tax may have arisen from "vāri" meanmg income.

Tax on land

It has been pointed out that the Saṅgam age saw the shift of the tribal

organization to the social configuration of individuals with holdings of their own. Kings emerging with the might of the sword appropriated lands to themselves and distributed them to warriors assisting them to gain victories. The Tolkāppiyam mentions, 'as a sub-situation of the veṭci fight (seizure of enemy's herds of cows initiating a war), the honouring of the victorious warrior-leader with kingly rank: as piḷḷaiyāṭṭu.[179] This enables us to see the fact that the might of the sword earned for one the power to rule and to possess all the land in the kingdom he had won. The land previously held in common by a tribal organization passed into the ownership of a powerful king-leader; and it gave him consequently the authority to levy taxes on lands under his control. "The wide world had the king as its soul:"[180] this saying was an unwritten law accepted by all in the Saṅgam days.

People were engaged in cultivating lands, and we find poets urging kings to provide requisite water resources for agricultural activities.[181] We can infer from their verses that the king took care of the needs of those engaged in cultivation. There was an arrangement of guarding water sources from breaches in rainy seasons and losses due to floods.[182] Measures like these led the king to impose land taxes. But we have no information from the texts about the basis of taxation. The commentators of the poetical works say that generally one-sixth of the produce of the land was collected as land tax.

It was the expectation of the people that the tax levied should be just and equitable, and on occasions when the officials collected the tax harassing subjects, they complained to the king pleading for fair treatment before him. Poet Pisirāndaiyār advised the Pāṇḍiya king to collect his tax in the proper way, which would yield him revenue in crores; on the contrary, using compulsion and force for the levy would result in the ruin of his kingly rule like a fertile field laid waste by an elephant's entry into it.[183]

During seasons of famine due to failure of monsoon rains when agricultural cultivation was held up and the men went to the extent of consuming the very seeds reserved for sowing the next crop. poets have pleaded before kings for the remission of land revenue collected by him. When there was a famine in the Cōḻa land, the poet, Veḷḷaikkuḍi-Nāgaṉār's request to the Cōḻa king, Kiḷḷivaḷavaṉ, was accepted by the latter, and arrears of tax dues were remitted according to the statement of the colophon appended to a verse in the Puṟanāṉūṟu.[184] From the phrase "paḻañseyk-kaḍan vīḍu" (release from the old dues on fields) in the colophon, we may infer the write-off of the balance of tax, or of the whole tax payable by peasants. Thus the modem custom of tax remission is seen to have been in vogue in the ancient Tamil land.

There were gifts of land by the king to various people including poets and soldiers; and these seem to be tax-free and were called "puravu".[185] A poet says that pāṉars, wandering minstrels, who got puravu lands forgot their usual singing profession itself.[186] The padigam to the second decade of the Padiṟṟup-pattu says that the king. Imayavarambaṉ Neḍuñcēralādaṉ, gave away to the poet, Kumaṭṭūrk-Kaṇṇaṉār, five-hundred villages as tax-free gifts. In the same work, we are told that the poet, Paraṇar, got as his reward the revenue accruing from Umbaṟkāḍu from King Kaḍal piṟak-kōṭṭiya Seṅguṭṭuvaṉ for singing his praises.

Tiṟai (tribute paid by a subordinate king)

Defeated kings acknowledged the over-lordship of their victors paying them a tributary payment called tiṟai. Poets have sung that victors received tribute payments from the defeated enemies in the battle field itself, and returned to their territories.[187] A king was advised that, if he wished to retain his old place of rule, he should himself go and pay his tributary payment to his over-lord, i.e. the king.[188] The tributary payments by different rulers gave the resources to a king to reward supplicant poets and minstrels approaching him for reward.[189]

The Cēra king, Imayavarambaṉ Neḍuñcēralādaṉ, is praised by poets as a forgiving monarch who would accept a foe irrespective of the severity of his wrong doings if the latter came humbly and paid tribute as a vassal to him. Another Cēra king, Āḍukōṭpāṭṭuc-Cēralādaṉ, is praised as calming down his anger when opponents, who attacked him unaware of their limits, realized their deficiency and humbly paid the vassal's tributary payment to him. Yet, another Cēra king, Peruñcēral Irumboṟai, received elephants and gold ornaments given as tribute to him by his defeated enemies, and returned to his kingdom. We are told that his warriors would shout in the battle field addressing the defeated side to lay down their vassal-tribute and that the tribute included elephants besides valuables as stated above.[190]

Ulgu (excise and customs duties)

The old Tamil word "ulgu" has been glossed by expositors as "suṅgam" (excise duty). Parimēl Aḻagar, the expositor of the Tirukkuṟaḷ,[191] elucidates the word "suṅgam" as the tax on articles coming by ships and vehicles into a land, informing us that taxes were levied on inland products as well as export-import goods. We gather that officials of the government collected the excise duties on highways when goods were moved between various areas of the country.[192] Customs duties on goods for export and import were collected by the Cōḻa king's officials at the Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṉam sea port as they affixed their king's tiger emblem on them.[193]

There were other sources of income to the king in addition to taxes. The fines collected from offenders augmented the king's treasury. A custom prevailed in those days that offenders against a king had to pay him gold as a punitive fine equal to their weight. The poet, Paraṇar, speaks of an incident in which Naṉṉaṉ refused to accept the offer of a golden statue equal to the weight of a girl (who had unwittingly committed a mistake) together with eighty-one elephants as compensation, and went to the extreme of executing her.[194] Such a tyrannical rule generally earned the displeasure of the Tamil people. We find that the Cōḻa king, Nalaṅkiḷḷi,

has deprecated rulers who harassed their subjects to pay more than justifiable levies.[195]

Law and justice

The set-up of Indian society prevented the framing of laws common to it as a whole in the modern sense. Hierarchical divisions based on castes and stages of life (varṇas and āśramas) made it stiff and conservative. The king's duty in the Saṅgam days was to preserve the prevailing set-up. There were no laws meant to regulate the whole society except the Dharma-śāstras which were followed from very early times to safeguard the organization of the Varṇāśrama system.

The councils of chosen people (maṉṟams) of a village or small town functioned as courts of justice as well. We have no information in the Saṅgam texts about the procedures for dispensing justice by the maṉṟams, as they met in open spaces and under shady trees, and the elders of the community decided cases called" kuṟai" (want or grievance); the judgement on a case after enquiry was known as muṟai or muṟaimai (rightful restoration).[196] To deliver a right judgement was considered performance of a high duty. We learn from the texts of "aham" (love) verses that those who suffered reverses in their love involvements appealed to their local maṉṟams for justice. A poem in the Kalittogai speaks of a lover-hero facing his rejection by his loved girl-heroine approaching the ūr-maṉṟam and addressing the elders in it to remedy his love-sickness.[197] The poem does not, however, tell us of the judgement given by the elders.

In a verse in the Kuṟuntogai, a lover-hero tells the girl-friend of his beloved that he would approach the assembly of elders to help him to get her.[198] In another verse of the Naṟṟiṇai, a girl-friend of the heroine asks the question: "Of what use is a maṉṟam (local court) if it does not listen to the complaint of a loved-heroine and give a decision?[199] The enquiry into a case by the local forum included examining the evidence of the witnesses called kari. Giving false evidence was considered wrong.[200]

Aṟaṅkūṟu-avaiyam (council announcing the just course)

The forums of justice in the major towns from where kings ruled were called councils giving forth the fair course of action as titled above. The king was himself the judge of this body and decided matters coming before it. People desired that only elders of advanced age should function as judges. We learn that the members of the council of just course were elderly people with grey hairs, which resembled the waves of the sea.[201] A later work, Paḻamoḻi, tells us that King Karikālaṉ who assumed rulership at a young age put on the guise of an aged person to hear the arguments of the two sides in a case and gave a judgement acceptable to the parties.[202]

The council of justice at Uṟaiyur, the Cōḻa capital, was famous for delivering judgements which never deviated from fairness and that the fairness was a permanent feature.[203] Respected elders sat with the king in councils deciding cases. The Maduraik-Kāñci tells us that the council of justice in Madurai had elders in it of pure lives, free from fear, grief or emotion; they were noble men without likes and dislikes; they were impartial holding to justice like a balance with scales evenly poised.[204]

The Tamil kings punished crime-doers severely. Cutting the teats of a cow, sundering the foetus in a mother's womb, and killing the twice-borns were considered base crimes.[205] Spies from other countries, when caught, were sentenced to death.[206] A king attempted to have the children of an enemy ruler killed.[207] The chieftain of a small territory imposed death penalty on a young girl who ate a mango fruit from his orchard floating down the flood.[208] If cases of rape of women were proved, the rapist was bound hand and foot, severely beaten, and water with cowdung dissolved in it was poured over his head.[209]

We learn that a woman, Miñili by name, swearing an oath that she would avenge the cruel punishment meted out to her father as she could not bear it, took to penance with the help of one Tidiyaṉ; she realized her vengeance and caused the killing of the Kōsars who had blinded her

father's eyes.[210] Non-payment of taxes to the king was considered an offence resulting in imprisonment as a punishment. Those who wanted tax-remission had to appeal to the king for it. [211]

Prisons were inseparable from the set-up of the administration of justice in the Saṅgam age. We may infer that those punished for various offences were put in prisons. Defeated kings were kept in jails. The Cēra king, Kaṉaikkāl Irumboṟai, was defeated in a battle with the Cōḻa king, and was jailed by the latter in Kuḍavāyiṟk-koṭṭam in his land, and was treated unbecomingly by the prison-guards.[212] Another Cēra king, Yāṉaikkatcēy Māndarañcēral Irumboṟai, when defeated by the Pāṇḍiyaṉ king, was jailed in the prison at Madurai. The colophon of the verse tells us that he somehow escaped from the jail to his kingdom and crowned himself as king again.[213] The severity of the punishments in that heroic age was obviously not leavened with modem ideas of reforming offenders.

5. SOCIETY

The society of the Saṅgam Age had an occupational and familial organization (kuḍi-muṟai). The word "kuḍi" is found in all Dravidian languages with the meaning "house, family, lineal descent".[214] The term "kulam" (indicating a clan) is found used in the Paripāḍal as the Tamilization of the Sanskrit phrase, kula-parvatam.[215] The word "sādi' derived from Sanskrit jāti (used for a caste) has been used in the Tolkāppiyam to mean "iṉam" (group as a collective entity) in two contexts and to mean "collection" only in one context.[216] The birth-based caste distribution was accepted in the Tamil land of the Saṅgam age itself, but it cannot be said to have lost its old hereditary familial organization in the new dispensation.

The Tamil land was divided as four geographical regions-Kuṟiñji (mountain), Mullai (Jungle), Marudam (field), and Neydal (coastal area) according to literary conventions. This conforms to the factual position. Mountains had forests near them; plains with flowing rivers and coasts

with backwater-spreads by the seas followed them. Occupations of people resident in these areas were shaped by the nature of their dwelling regions; their appearance, conduct, dress, and customs differed according to the occupations they pursued. Yet, they were dependent on one another living in a delimited land and knit together by the language they spoke in common. The Tamil language gave an ethnic identity underlying differences on the surface and contributed to the elements of an evolving culture of the people.

Though the Tamil people pursued different occupations in different areas, they did not become groups isolated from each other. Social mobility among scattered populations prevailed with the impact of barter of goods and frequent internecine warfare among the kings and other chiefs. There was a migrant orientation as warrior-groups participating in wars were often colonized in new places of fertility. We may say that no differences of social ranks prevailed except the rich and the poor based on the amenities they had access to. The content of the love-poems ("aham" verses) of the Tamil Saṅgam literature points to the absence of restrictions of geographical region or occupation as obstructions to marriage relationships.

Social set-up according to natural regions

The Tamil people were differentiated on the basis of the geographical region they lived in as kuṟavar (hillmen), āyar (cowherds), uḻavar (peasants), and nuḷaiyar (sea coast dwellers). The Tolkāppiyam gives the names "āyar" and "vēṭṭuvar" based on tiṇais (poetic classifications).[217] The residents of Kuṟiñji (mountain) areas were known as kuṟavar, kāṉavar; they lived in little cottages in places called siṟukuḍi (small habitation) and kuṟicci (hilly village). They pursued hunting in jungles and reared dogs aiding them in hunting prey. As these people lived in border areas, they shared in cattle raids (of veṭci-fight) on enemy lands, seizing the cattle of the other side. They sowed grains in fields recovered from forests by burning them. To guard fully grown grains in fields from attacks of birds,

they would send young maidens as watchers. The grains in fields were also protected from destruction by elephants as men watched over them, sitting over improvised-loft-structures in the area. The residents of Kuṟiñji lived by barter exchanges of the honey which they gathered and the edible roots they dug up; the god they worshipped was Murugaṉ; and they conducted festivals in his honour and made offerings to him.

Jungles and their adjacent areas were called Mullai regions; the residents in these areas were primarily engaged in cattle and sheep-rearing. They were called āyar, iḍaiyar, kōvalar, and pōduvar, and their villages were known as cēris. Along with sheep and cattle-rearing, they cleared the forest-lands and grew non-rice grain crops in the lands reclaimed. The women of the āyar community went about selling by barter milk and butter-milk they got from their domestic cattle. As rearing cattle and sheep was their prime occupation, they had, on occasions, to move from place to place in search of grazing fields for their animals. The god they worshipped was Tirumāl.

The plains lying adjacent to rivers were called Marudam. Cultivation of crops flourished in this region of abundant water-resources. The men tilling the fields and raising agricultural crops were called uḻavar (tillers); their women were known as uḻattiyar; their dwelling places had the name "ūr". Engagements in agriculture made the people of the Marudam relatively permanent residents of their region. Their economic conditions was better than that of others. It was earlier suggested that kingship in the Tamil land may have originated in the Marudam region of settled life. Vēndaṉ (interpreted as Indra) was the god of the Marudam fields. We do not have evidence of the Tamil people of the Saṅgam celebrating festivals in his worship.

The sea-coast and abutting lands called Neydal had residents known as nuḷaiyar and baratavar; they lived in small cottages by the sea shore in settlements called pākkam and paṭṭiṉam. Their occupation was fishing in the sea. The Paṭṭinap-pālai describes the prosperous life of these

fisherfolk of the Neydal areas. They must have engaged in trading with other coastal areas going in their boats; we also learn that they were engaged in pearl-diving, making conch-bracelets, and preparing salt.

Pālai (waste land), the regional division in poetic conventions, did not exist as a separate geographical area in the Tamil land. Kuriñji and Mullai regions, which become waste lands (turn deserts) without rains and the burning sun scorching them, were called "Pālai" in the Tamil country. Dependent on monsoon rains, their failure causing severe drought was a known occurrence, even as it continues to the present day. In these periods of utterly dry days, people of the Pālai region lived by hunting and acts of highway robbery. They were called "eyinar" and their hamlets were known as "kurumbu". These people had Korravai, the goddess of victory, as their deity of worship and adoration.[218]

Occupational social set-up

We have dealt with the shaping of livelihoods of the people by the geographical areas of the Tamil country they lived in. These livelihoods of different types obviously evolved from the days of tribal life led by the Tamil people and developed more specialized occupational features with the growth of civilizational arts in an ordered social set-up. Agriculture and production of goods forged ahead with new methods and devices. The Marudam region of cultivated land became the centre of prosperous activities as arts and crafts and businesses developed; and the people engaged in the production of different goods and services were specializing in them, forming separate classes of artisans, craftsmen, workers, etc.

Smiths

The discovery and use of iron ushered in a fresh age of civilization and iron implements came to be in demand for war and agricultural operations. Those who made these were known as kollar. Their duty was to make lances. The Sangam works tell us details of their functioning also. In his workspot, the smith had his furnace for kindling fire which he did with

bellows operated by stepping on it, or blowing it with his mouth. When he beat the red-hot iron, sparks of fire scattered from it. To pick hot iron, he used tongs (koḍiṟu). He beat red hot iron on the anvil, making it bend or go lighter as needed for shaping various implements. The smithy had a water pot to pour or sprinkle water on the hot iron. Every village had its iron-smith, who made implements of war and also chains for tying elephants to posts.[219]

Carpenters

Craftsmen working on wooden articles were called taccar. They made ploughs necessary for tilling land before cultivation and chariots figuring in wars. Wooden carts and other vehicles used for transporting goods and carrying people for journeys were their handiwork. They also made palace doorways and their doors, big doors of forts, and the cross-bars put behind them for ensuring security.[220]

Makers of ornaments

There were goldsmiths making ornaments of gold, melting it to suit the particular ornament they chose to work on. The purity of gold was tested by rubbing it on a stone called kaṭṭaḷaikkal (touchstone). We have many similes in the Saṅgam poems based on gold and touchstone. The balance in which gold was weighed was called kaṉṉattaṭṭu.

There were workmen making domestic vessels of copper and other baser metals; they knew the process of casting, pouring molten copper over the earthen models of the articles they were making; the shaped moulds were then made stronger and more refined by beating and scraping them.

We read of workers making valued ornaments using precious metals like gold, pearl, coral, etc. Beautiful ornaments are said to have been made in a place called Koḍumaṇam. A section of Brahmins were in the profession of making bracelets, cutting them out of conches. The Saṅgam poems tell us of various craftsmen making articles like baskets, sieves,

strings, and ropes using reeds, bamboo, and other plant fibres, besides stitching of clothes with needles and of wounds caused by weapons in battles.

There were also varieties of expert craftsmen engaged in socially useful occupations like weavers and dyers of clothes, potters making earthen vessels, artists drawing pictures with their brushes dipped in lac, specialists in the business of cooking food, workers engaged in washing clothes, doctors attending to treatment of illnesses, and experts in the art of building.[221] The Tamil people have always been primarily oriented towards agriculture, and the occupations of the craftsmen noticed above will be seen to be mostly connected with the Marudam region of cultivated fields. The goldsmiths making valued ornaments probably lived in the bigger towns where rulers had their dwellings.

Categorizations like āyar, vēṭṭuvar, referring to residents of regions have to be understood as related to the tribal groups which prevailed in the Tamil land during its period of change, and it is not proper to bring them under the caste system which came in later days. These tribal groups pursuing occupations determined by their geographical position and social needs have not been identified as castes, but lumped under common names like āsāri (artisan) signifying their craft even today.

Varṇāśrama-dharma

This system is explained through the dharma (assigned duty) for each varṇa or social division; it prescribes the duties for each varṇa and insists on their obligatory nature. It posits differences of high and low, based on birth and lays down different duties for people of different births.

Fourfold caste set-up

It has been stated earlier that the Tamil society must have begun as an organization of tribal groups; and these groups affiliated to their geographical regions were known as āyar (cowherds), vēṭṭuvar, eyiṉar (huntsmen), etc. Though people in different regions lived close to each

other, there were no migrant tendencies among them. There were no hierarchical differences in these groups. These have to be kept apart from craftsmen like Kollar (smiths) and Taccar (carpenters) who were products of needs arising in later civilized life; in modern terms, they may be called men of the working classes.

The concept of classifying people based on their birth made its impact on the Tamils only after their contact with the followers of Vēdic religion. The author of the Tolkāppiyam does not associate the residents of Tamil regions like āyar, vēṭṭuvar, and so on with castes, though in another chapter of his work, he classifies the Tamil people according to the four fold system as Andaṉar, Arasar, Vaisiyar, and Vēḷāḷar.[222] This can be explained as the result of his comparative statement of Tamil customs and traditions with Northern counterparts in some contexts. When he speaks of sound-qualities of Tamil phonemes and of the secret love of the Tamil people's weddings, he mentions the Āryan parallels, and his formulation of the fourfold castes is obviously in the same vein. A deeper examination of the Saṅgam literature leads to the untenability of this position.

The characterization of Sūdras, ranked the last in the Varṇāśrama scheme, as vēḷāḷar (peasants) by the author of the Tolkāppiyam shows that his "varṇa" classification is an artificial one. The kings of the Tamil land are not identifiable with Kṣatriyas of the North; they belonged to the country of their origin. The three major Tamil kings and rulers of smaller territories called Vēḷirs, who had marital relationships with them, were all indigenous, unrelatable to the Kṣatriyas of the North. The caste system with its compartmentaliization of communities is special to India. A verse of the Puṟanāṉūṟu shows the acceptance on a theoretical level of the fourfold caste system;[223] yet this verse states that anyone born in a lower caste will be esteemed by the higher castes for his learning, thus implying that one's superiority is earned by learning and not by birth alone. The caste structure had thus a resilience relaxing its rigidity.

In another Puṟanāṉūṟu verse also,[224] poet Māṅguḍi-kiḻar has the rhetorical statement: "There are no clans (kuḍis) worth mentioning except tuḍiyar, pāṇar, paṟaiyar, and kaḍambar." This is put in the mouth of a victorious hero of the warrior community who obviously praised the members of the fighting community only as the most worthy one. It cannot be taken to embrace the entirety of the social classes of the Tamil land. It is inapproopriate to consider these as "castes" ignoring the actualities of the position in the country described above.

Under the fourfold scheme of castes superimposed on the Tamil country, its society was divided on a hierarchical basis. Andaṇar were placed at the top level, and all the Saṅgam works speak of their many activities. A considerable number of poet-composers of the verses of the Saṅgam collections belong to this group. The word "Brāhmaṇar" commonly used for Andaṇar does not find a place in the Saṅgam literature; so also the word "Vēḍiyar" (adherent of the Vēda). In their place, we find the words "pārppāṉ", "pārppaṉar", and "maṟaiyōr" in use.

Brāhmaṇar, Vēḍtiyar

These words absent in the existing Saṅgam literature do not admit of the meaning sometimes specified to them: "Those knowing Brahman." To know Brahman is the rarest of all the achievements according to the Upanishads, and this meaning is inappropriate as the designation of a community. "Brāhminhood" is a high ideal and should not to be limited to a caste. The Vēdas have the divisions of Samhitā, Brāhmaṇa, and Āraṇyaka: and the Brāhmaṇa, the second part of the Vēda, gives the guidelines for the performance of sacrifices (yāgas) with the mantras of worship of various gods detailed in the Saṁhitās.

The community of Brāhmaṇas was engaged in performing the sacrifices according to the instructions of the Brāhmaṇa part of the Vēdas; the two names connect with each other and lead us to say that the Brāhmaṇa community performed the sacrifices as prescribed in that part

of the Vēdas with the same name.[225] Several Brāhmaṇas figuring in the Saṅgam poems are found to have engaged in the performance of sacrifices on behalf of kings.

Meaning of the word "Andaṇar"

This word occurs in the Tolkāppiyam and the Saṅgam literature. A couplet of the Tirukkuṟaḷ says that andaṇar are people of virtue (aṟavōr) as they love every living thing (as God's creation). Parimēl Aḻagar,[226] the expositor of the Tirukkuṟaḷ, explains the word as a causative formation splitting it up as "am + tāṇ + ar" which means those having beautiful and pleasant kindness. Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, another famous commentator, splits the word as "antu + aṇavu + ar" taking it to mean those who move with and cultivate the study of the Vēdānta (the end portion of the Vēda-the Upaniṣads).[227]

But, this word is used in the Saṅgam poems in a wider sense of renunciation and self-sacrifice, generalizing from the particular people who lived peripatetic lives spreading their ideal teachings wherever they went; they were also called Andaṇar in Saṅgarn poems; they carried umbrellas, hand-jars (kamaṇdalams), and the three-knotted staff (mukkōl) meant respectively for protection from the sun, provides for their need of water, and indication of the identity of the religious faith to which they belonged.[228] They wore the ochre robe which they themselves washed clean and dried in the Sun.[229] They kept the vow of fasting and lived a simple life, getting alms from only one Andaṇar house they chose.[230]

We get verses in which the nurse (sevili) of the heroine, going in search of the latter who has eloped with her lover, through the wasteland, meets these wandering holy anchorites and asks them whether they chanced to meet the missing lovers; these men tell her of the hard realities of domestic life in which women are of no use to their parents when grown up.[231]

Aṟivar (seers)

The Saṅgarn literature and its grammar, the Tolkāppiyam, mention

Aṟivar in addition to Andaṉar. These were renounced men endowed with insight knowledge of the threeefold time,[232] and of the social institutions of the married life of the hero and the heroine.[233] It makes a distinction between Aṟivar and Pārppaṉar (or Andaṉar);[234] Iḷambūraṇar considers the Aṟivar to be the Kaṉiyaṉ (diviner by calculations).[235] But Naccirārkkiṉiyar takes the Aṟivar to be the person endowed with the vision of the threefold time; and the verses he cites in support of his meaning are found in the Saṅgam corpus of poems.[236]

Pārppār and Pārppaṉar

These words have been used in the Saṅgam literature and the Tolkāppiyam.[237] Their base is "pār" meaning "to see or look". The Vēdic verses are ascribed to Ṛṣis (rendered in English as seers), who have seen or envisioned truths of life by their inner eyes. Their teachings revealing their intuitions are called darśanam (sight). The exact Tamil equivalent "kāṭci" of this Sanskrit word "darśanam" finds a place in a verse of Poet Kaṉiyaṉ Puṅguṉṟaṉār.[238]

We find from the Saṅgam works that the "Pārppaṉar" were held in high esteem in the Saṅgam age-obviously on account of their lives of self-sacrifice and prayerful abstinence from all indulgences with observances of fasting making their bodies lean. It appears that they always chose to walk to places in accordance with the simplicity of their life style. They themselves washed their clothes beating off their dirt on stone-slabs[239] and wore them, keeping them without being "profaned" by contacts with others.

Pārppaṉar (Brāhmiṉs) functioned as royal messengers besides their role of studying and reciting the Vēdas; and the Tolkāppiyam assigns these two duties to them.[240] We read of a Brāhmaṇa messenger as a young person in both the Puṟanāṉūṟu and Ahanāṉūṟu anthologies. The former says that the Brāhmaṇa messenger, weakened and enfeebled by his travel by foot, reached the enemy king's palace by night and without

waiting for the next morning's arrival, went straight into the palace and delivered the message he carried to the king briefly.[241] This may be taken to show the Brāhmaṇa messenger's fearless performance of his task as well as the esteem in which the Tamil kings held him. The Ahanāṉūṟu[242] speaks of an incident in which a Brāhmaṇa messenger who had often gone on errands was waylaid and killed by highway robbers suspecting him of carrying gold, and finding only a scroll of his king's message to be delivered at his destination.

It was considered an offence of the worst kind to kill Brāhmaṇas.[243] Before them Tamil kings bowed with humility. A king happily admits that he never bowed before others except Pārppaṉār.[244] It is said that behaviour causing sorrow to Brāhmaṇas[245] would never be indulged in by the Tamil kings; they treated these men with respect, showering gifts of flowers and gold with symbolic water on their outstretched hands.[246]

We find that even in the Saṅgam age, Pārppaṉar were raised to the level of divinities as "Bhūsurar" (gods on earth) paving the way for the bhakti movement. A lover declares his love to his beloved swearing by the venerated Pārppār in a verse of the Paripāḍal.[247] A heroine, according to the Ainkuṟuṉūṟu, wishes prayerfully: "May the Pārppār carry on their Vēdic recitations for enhancing the land's prosperity and for the household life flourishing high!"[248]. She thus testifies to the belief current in the society of her times that the chantings of the Brāhmaṇas would benefit the land bringing rains and rendering households happy and harmonious.

The Pārppār kept up the purity of their lives oriented to holiness besides avoiding external pollutions as well. A poem of the Paripāḍal tells us of their going away without bathing in the flooded Vaiyai river at Madurai on seeing it polluted with the perfume powders and garlands cast off by men with their wives and city courtesans, who had bathed in its earlier reaches. The people who thus turned away from the polluted river are said to be Pārppār and Andaṇar, which shows to be a distinction between the two in the same commmunity.[249] Lord Śiva is characterized

as a Pārppāṉ meaning a holy one who partook of the offeing in a sacrifice, according to a verse of the Paripāḍal.[250]

Some of those of the Pārppār community not engaged in the performance of ritual acrifices (called Vēḷāp-Pārppār) seem to have engaged themselves in making bracelets from sea shells.[251] The role of functioning as one of the mouthpieces (vāyilkaḷ) going between estranged husband and wife in the poetic tradition of Aham is assigned to Pārppār in the Tolkāppiyam.[252] They also figure as close friends and alter egos of the hero-lovers in the tradition.[253] A poem of the Kalittogai narrates an incident of a disgraceful encounter of a heroine with an old Pārppāṉ, affected by leprosy and lustfulness at the place of her appointed tryst with her lover.[254] This attests to the aberration of a member of the Pārppāṉ community which must have had its quota of undesirable people.

Muṉivar (sages)

The Saṅgam poems speak of Andaṇar advanced in holy life and spirituality as Muṉivars; they are also mentioned as performers in ritual sacrifices. They had their hair bound in tufts (jaṭai) on their heads in the manner of forest ascetics. The poet, Kāri Kiḻar, reveres them as "nānmaṟai-Muṉivar" (sages versed in the four Vēdas or Vēdic Ṛṣis).[255] The Puṟanāṉūṟu mentions sages with shining braid-tufts wandering in the sunshine, with the air only as their food and doing penance for universal good.[256] The Paṭṭiṉap-pālai speaks of sages with high braid-tufts who performed ritual sacrifices in places surrounded by groves in the Cōḷa capital, Puhār; the cuckoo-birds in the groves, unable to bear the smoke rising from the sacrificial fires, took to flight to other places.[257]

The Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai describes the sages who worshipped Lord Murugaṉ at Tiruvāviṉaṉkuḍi as "renounced anchorites berefit of likes and dislikes".[258] The Perumpāṇāṟṟup-paḍai mentions that sages performed ritual sacrifices on mountain-spaces in Toṇḍai-nāḍu and that the elephants, monkeys, and deer were helpful to them.[259] These

illustrations highlight the preference attached to the anchorite life of renunciation in the Tamil land over the other stages of life. The sages are stated to be "Andaṇar" in some verses. However, we may imagine that others too took to the practice of austerities attaining the rank of Muṇivars.

Andaṇar

In the social classification given by the Tolkāppiyam, "Andaṇar" are placed at the top, with their insignia as the sacred thread, water-pot (karaham), three-knotted staff, and sitting-plank (maṇai). They wore the thread, and they carried the other articles with them for their use.[260] They kept tufts of hair on their heads; we infer that these were in the front part at the top of their heads as they are compared to the manes on a horse on its neck. [261] This custom is still regarded as religious observance in their midst. They were known as 'twice born" (once with physical birth and another with the sacred thread investiture).[262] The sacred thread was threefold with three strands in one.[263] They learned and recited the unwritten scripture handed down by recitation from generation to generation.[264] They took to the householder's life only after spending forty-eight years of celibate life of scriptural study and ideal religious continence.[265]

Rising early in the morning, the Brāhmaṇas chanted the Vēdic scripture; the sounds of the chantings were sweet like the humming of the bees feeding on honey-filled flowers.[266] The threefold sacrificial fires were maintained by them as their wealth. They chanted the Vēdic mantras in the prescribed manner each day during morning, noon, and evening. They were engaged in worshipping the deity in the temple wearing pure, moist clothes freshly washed clean (by beating them against stones to remove dirt).[267] The Maduraik-Kāñci describes the high-souled, noble life led by the Brāhmins chanting the Vēdas and performing ritual sacrifices.[268] They were duly attending to the upkeep of the three fires propitiating them according to the Vēdic injunctions,[269] and were praised by sacrifice

performing Andaṇar of ripe learning;[270] their expertise and profundity of scholarship in the Vēdas earned them the appellation, "nānmaṟai mudalvar" (the prime persons well-versed in the four Vēdas).[271]

The Saṅgam works mention the duties proper to Andaṇar as six in number.[272] These are explained by Naccinārkkiniyar as the "good" functions: chanting the Vēdas; causing others to chant the Vēdas; performing ritual sacrifices; enabling others to perform ritual sacrifices; giving in charity; and accepting alms.[273] The Tolkāppiyam points out that chanting (the Vēdas) and acting as royal messengers were their duties.[274]

We get some details of the dwelling places of Andaṇars in the Saṅgam works. Their residences were distinguishable from those of others. The streets where they lived were marked by their cleanliness; there were no dogs (with their attendant pollution) in the streets. The house-fronts were spacious; supplicants got food cooked from red paddy grains and pure ghee (for the asking) from the residents. [275] The floors of their house were swept with water mixed cowdung; calves of cows were tied to posts of small pandals (sheds) attached to the houses. The dogs and domestic fowl were not reared in them. Parrots were brought up in the residences, and they would repeat the mantras chanted by their masters which they heard often.

Andaṇars' wives were beautiful and chaste, having the chastity of the exemplary Arundhati. They were hospitable to guests whom they served with cooked rice of high quality grains with cut pieces of pomegranate raw fruits having mixture of pepper powder and buttermilk flavoured by curry leaves; mango pickles would be given adding taste to the food.[276] Girls in their houses used to pick flowers from mullai creepers and made garlands out of them and wore them in their braids.[277]

We get some details of the ritual sacrifices performed by Andaṇar in the Saṅgam works. The kings, Palyāgasālai Mudukuḍumip-peru Vaḻudi (Pāṇḍiyan dynasty), Palyānaic-celkeḻu-Kuṭṭuvan, and Selvakkaḍuṅko-

Vāḻiyādaṉ (both of Cēra royal lineage) are stated to have performed sacrifices with Andaṇar as their helping preceptors.[278] The Cōḻa king, Perunaṟkiḷḷi, has the title "Rājasūyam-vēṭṭa" meaning "the performer of a Rājasūya sacrifice." Chiefs of small principalities are also stated to have performed sacrifices with Andaṇar.[279]

A big sacrifice performed by one Andaṇaṉ, by name Kavuṇiyaṉ Viṇṇantāyaṉ is described in the Puṟanānūṟu.[280] Esteemed by kings and people at large, the Andaṇar occupying a high position in the society were the recipients of gold and land and other riches. given by kings pouring the oblation of water with flowers (as a ritual). [281] They bowed their heads venerating Andaṇar with folded hands in obeisance.[282] These revered men of religion were considered worthy of protection like cows, and it was taken as the ruler's duty to inform them before the outbreak of a battle so that they could move to safer places.[283]

There were several Andaṇar Tamil poets in the Saṅgam age, and we have poems mentioning their gotras, ancestrals (clans) like Kavuṇiyaṉ, Gōtamaṉ, Kauśikaṉ, and Bhāradvājaṉ. There were also active poets with gotra names like Vātūla, Ātrēya, and Māḍalaṉ, besides some whose names appear against poems without any identifying appellation. Greatly honoured among the Saṅgam poets is the Brāhmaṇa Kapilar; he says of himself: "I am a seeker of patronage of royalty, a confirmed Andaṇaṉ and again "I am an Andaṇaṉ and a poet" .[284] Another peer woman poet, Māṟokkattu Nappasalaiyār speaks with admiration of Kapilar as a great Andaṇa with perfect faultless scholarship". [285]

We have so far noticed details about Andaṇar in the ancient Tamil Nadu and indicated that they were known by different names such as Pārppār, Aṛivar, and so on. It is noteworthy that not all the Brāhmaṇas living in Tamil Nadu can be assumed to have migrated here from North India.

The analysts divide Brāhmaṇas into two broad divisions as Gauḍa

and Drāviḍa Brāhmaṇas, with five subdivisions under each known as pañca- Gauḍa, and pañca-Drāviḍa.[286] In Tamil Nadu, the Brāhmañas have three major divisions of Bṛhaccaraṇa, Asṭa sahasra, and Vaḍama. The first name may mean (those having) big Vēdic poetry for their study or big ancestry; the second means families of those of eight thousand. These are distinct from Vaḍama (people of the North), their name pointing to their having come from the Northern area.

N. Subrahmanian thinks that some at least of the Veḷḷāḷas (cultivators) in Tamil Nadu, who owned lands, may have been attracted by immigrant Brāhmaṇas from the North and became themselves Brāhmaṇas, adopting their lifestyle.[287] He says that this supposition derives some strength from the fact that, while Vaḍamar do not associate their names with native place-names in Tamil Nadu, the other two sects invariably add their native village name to their own names.

The Padiṟṟup-pattu, a Saṅgam anthology on Cēra kings, gives us interesting information in its seventh and ninth decades. The padigam of the (61-70) seventh decede tells us that King Selvakkaḍuṅkō-Vāḻiyādaṉ excelled his Andaṇar (Purōhita) in performing religious duties. The padigam (81-90) of the ninth decade says that King Iḷañcēral Irumborai's minister Maiyūr-Kiḻaṉ excelled the Purōhita of the royal council, to the extent of his substituding him in religious perfomances.[288] These two examples give us room to think that those of the higher castes other than Brāhmaṇas had access to Vēdic learning.

The compiler of the Ahanānūṟu poetic collection named Uruttira-śarmaṉ (Rudra-śarma) is the son of the compiler of the Kuṟuntogai by name Uppūrikuḍi Kiḻāṉ whose name indicates a Veḷḷāḷa-origin with the Kiḻāṉ suffix.[289] The son has the Tamilized form of Rudra-'sarma, indicating Andaṇar community with the suffix "Sarmaṉ" entitled to Vēdic study. It appears that he became a Brāhmaṇa with Vēdic study. From these examples we may gather that the caste structure in the Saṅgam age

admitted relaxations in cases worthy of them. It has been stated earlier that the Tamil society chose to regard a lowly born person as equal to one of high caste if he stood high in his learning. It would appear, then, that at least some people, though not born as Brāhmaṇas, acquired by their learning and conduct higher status as persons countable as Andaṉar, Aṟivar, and Muṉivar. They might have risen by gradations among Brāhmaṇas-Andaṉar to Aṟivar, and then to Muṉivar. The Brāhmaṇas in Tamil Nadu attained their high position by their life of self-sacrifice and devotion to ideals, and not by birth alone, as N. Subrahmanian puts it.[290]

Arasar (kings and rulers)

According to the varṇaśrama ranking stated in the Tolkāppiyam, kings and rulers are placed next to Andaṉar as Kṣatriyas. But this does not fit in with facts as the kings and chiefs who ruled in Tamil Nadu were all purely indigenous in origin, there being no Kṣatriya caste here. While Kṣatriyas of the North wore the sacred thread, there is no evidence of Tamil rulers wearing it in the Tamil country.

The rise of rulership in Tamil society would go back to the assertion of bravery in fighting, judging from a statement on "piḷḷaiyāṭṭu" in the Tolkāppiyam.[291] This was a dance of appreciation of a young person who fought with his sword and earned distinction: the dance was with the drum in a measured manner, and the land was bestowed on the hero. Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, the expositor of the text, explains that the people bestow the land, and it becomes the charge of the ruler.[292] Thus we have evidence that the expert fighter with the sword in a battle who excelled in bringing big victories to his side became the leader, and in due course, was entrusted with rulership of the people.

The three major Tamil kings, the Cēras, Cōḻas, and Pāṇḍiyas, did not consider themselves as belonging to a royal caste, but to native dynasties of the land (kuṭi); Poet Kōvūr Kiḻār, acting as a peace maker between two estranged princes of the royal family of the Cōḻas, Nalaṅkiḷḷi and Neḍuṅkiḷḷi,

the latter being imprisoned by the former, reminds them of the infamy caused to their common "kuṭi".[293]

Further, the Puṟanāṉūṟu verses make it clear that socio-political conditions in Tamil Nadu went against the formation of a Kṣatriya like caste. Rulers of smaller areas, always fighting and annexing their territories to bigger kingdoms: this was a constant texture in the Saṅgam age. This annexation was also carried out by marriage alliances and peace-treaties between fighters.[294] The rulers of small areas may have given their women in marriage to major kings. We get a clear example in the Puṟanāṉūṟu of the three major kings seeking the hands of daughters of the chieftain Pāri ruling Parambu Mount and laying siege to his territory on his refusal to accede to their demand, and killing him.[295] Pāri's bosom friend and poet, Kapilar, undertook the duty of taking Pāri's daughters after his death to other rulers and requested them to marry the girls.

The Vēḷir were rulers of several smaller areas in Tamil Nadu and we find that they have at various times fought against the major kings, aligning themselves with one or more of them, as also forming their own ruler groups. Eleven Vēḷir-rulers joined with the Cēra and Pāṇḍliya kings to fight with the Cōḻa king, Karikāl Peruvaḷattāṉ, and the latter monarch won over them.[296] We also read that when the Vēḷir joining with the Cēra and Cōḻa kings attacked the Pāṇḍiya king, Neḍuñceḻiyaṉ, the latter inflicted a notable defeat on them in the battle of Talaiālaṅkāṉam.[297]

We learn that the Vēḷir rulers were immigrants coming into Tamil Nadu from Dwārasamudram in the Mysore area. Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, the famous expositor to many old Tamil classics, says that Sage Agastya brought them with him and settled them here.[298] Poet Kapilar, in his praise of a chief, Iruṅkōvēḷ, says that he came of the line of Vēḷir whose original ancestor arose from the hōma-kuṇḍa (fire-pit) of a Northern sage performing a ritual sacriifice and that this family line ruled over the town of Tuvarāpati for generations.[299] Vēḷir rulers had marriage alliances with the

great Tamil kings, as evidenced by the padigams (the decades) of the Padirrup-pattu. These reinforce the fact that the ruling class of the Tamil Nadu had nothing to do with the Kṣatriyas of the Āryan classification.

Vaṇigar

The community, engaging in trade and exchange of goods, called Vaisya in the Tolkāppiyam cannot be considered a separate hereditary caste by itself.[300] The residents of Kuriñji (mountain), Mullai (Jungle) and Neydal (sea coast) lands, who produced articles useful for life, sold them, and most of the inland trade took place by barter. We read that residents of the sea coast areas making salt carried it in carts on highways with their families, and sold them at appropriate places.[301]

Those who bought and sold goods were called Vaṇigar; the word "Vaṇigaṉ" finds a place in the Puranāṉūṟu, where the poet praises the munificent patron Āy as "this Vaṇiga (Āy) does not sell charity at a price."[302] The Paripāḍal states that the Vaṇigas in the open yard of the temple of God Tirumāl in Iruṇdaiyūr used to sell to people articles they obtained from within the country and from outside lands.[303] The Paṭṭiṉap-pālai mentions that Vaṇigars pursued their occupation with impartiality.[304]

In this way, we get details of the trading business carried on in big towns like Madurai and Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṉam. This business must have taken place with exchange of coinage, for we have notices of the coin called "kāsu" in Saṅgam literature.[305] We gather that a section of the fisher folk, residents of the sea coast region called "Paratavar", were engaged in trade activities and that they exercised rulership like chief of smaller areas.[306] Some of them took to foreign commerce, and earning much wealth lived in great prosperity; their life is portrayed in the Paṭṭiṉap-pālai.[307] All these go to show the absence of a caste of merchants born as such in Tamil Nadu.

Vēḷāḷar

Tolkāppiyar, the author of the Saṅgam age grammar, adapting the

Varṇaśrama framework for Tamil Nadu, places Vēḷāṉ māndar (people pursuing agricultural occupations) in the place of the fourth caste of Sūdras;[308] he assigns only the occupation of tilling and producing crops to Vēḷāṉ māndar. We find a rare use of the words "Vēḷāṉ" and "Vēḷāṉmai" (agricultural occupation) in the Saṅgam poems, and that in the three contexts of their appearance they have the meaning "benevolent help".[309] The word "Vēḷaḷar" occurs only in one place.[310] The word most often used for people of agricultural occupations is "uḻavar" (tillers of the soil). All uḻavars cannot be said to have owned fields. A verse of the Puṟanāṉūṟu says that there were men with a single plough carrying on tilling and other works, as conveyed by the name of Ōrēr-uḻavar (tiller with one plough). Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar classifies cultivators as those tilling (the soil) themselves and those causing others to till and produce for them.[311]

Those with ownership of land were called "Kiḻār" (owner), a word derived from kiḻamai (ownership right). Many Saṅgam poets have added the affix "Kiḻār" to their names leading one to suppose their ownership of lands. The Siṟupāṇāṟṟup-paḍai speaks of the prosperous life which the uḻavar led with a description of the hospitable entertainment of guests by their women.[312] Cultivators planted fields of rice and sugarcane; and sugarcane crushing factories were in existence then. They liberally gave away their paddy crops to visitors on their threshing floors.

The word "Vēḷāḷar" may have originated after the Saṅgam period; it admits of connection with the Vēḷir of the Saṅgam days. As evidenced by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, the Vēḷir had marital connections with the three kings of Tamil Nadu.[313] They were rulers of smaller areas and cannot be bracketed with any lower caste of the caste system. The Tolkāppiyam, which attempts to describe Tamil society according to North Indian concepts, formulates a fourfold classification of the caste system.

High and low ranks

The society of the Saṅgam age had its differences of high and low

rankings. Some statements in the Tolkāppiyam about the speech of lower classes make us infer that a section of the society was considered low.[314] We also learn from the Puṟanāṉūṟu that workers with leather products and drummers sounding war-drums like tuḍi, paṟai, and taṇṇumai were considered to be lower classes called "iḻiśinar" and also "pulaiyar."[315] On the Paṟaiyar's sounding the war-drum, the king would start for the ensuing battle. The Pulaiyar's face ever had a sorrowful look. He was entrusted with the work of the disposal of corpses in the cremation grounds. Sometimes even a Pāṇaṉ (a minstrel and dancer) was reviled as a Pulaiyaṉ, lowering him from his position on account of bad behaviour.[316]

The washer-woman washing clothes (by beating them on stones and scouring them clean) was called pulaitti: many verses speak of her scouring clothes clean; she also took to dances of divine possession on occasions. In one verse, she is compared with a courtesan (parattai).[317] These details show the hierarchical differences among classes which existed in the old Tamil society; but they were very different from the Varṇāśrama arrangement; and these differences may have existed from very old times in the Tamil communities.

Slavery

Along with differences of high and low, there was master-slave hierarchies in the ancient Tamil society. There were no markets for sale and buying of slaves as it obtained in the West. The Tolkāppiyam mentions slaves (aḍimaikaḷ) as "aḍiyōr".[318] The Puṟanāṉūṟu refers to them as aḍiyuṟai, those who lived under the feet of their masters, dependent fully on them.[319] There was a practice of branding the breasts of slaves with a mark to indicate their being the property of their owners.[320] We may here recall the similar branding of religious symbols which Tirunāvukkarasar, the Śaiva saint, caused to be made on his shoulders by the bhūta-gaṇas, indicating him as the slave of Lord Śiva.

Status of women

It cannot be said that women in the Saṅgam age enjoyed a high status. The characterizations of the poetical conventions of the hero and the heroine in Aham verses referred to in the Tolkāppiyam place the latter in a secondary role, lower than the former. The male. a hero, should rise in high stature over the heroine whom he loves; valour and grandeur belong to him only. The loved female has to display womanly fear, modesty, conservation and caution in action-all qualities of sex subordination.[321] It was emphasized that modesty for a woman was worthier than holding on to a life (of licence); and that the practice of chastity by a wcman stood even higher than her modesty.[322] It was held that it was not the way of virtue for a woman to transgress the limits of her position as a wife.[323] The statements in the Tolkāppiyam about conventions according to which women are not eligible to go on sea-journeys or to be present in war-camps along with men show their position as subordinate to that of men.[324]

There were also restrictions imposed on women in pursuing their course of love. While a male-lover can openly declare his passion of love, a woman's love should be expressed only by suggestive gestures.[325] If the parents came to know of their girl's falling in love and her secret trysts with her lover, they would restrain her from going out and watch her movements. This is recognized as a situation for poetic composition in the Aham literary conventions, which is called "iṟseṟittal" (confining within the house).[326] Women had no right to pursue independent occupations which were reserved for men alone. It was thought that for men earning by their work is like their very soul; on the contrary, for women their husband was their very soul (and they had no other thing to do).[327] Women thus lived as dependents on their husbands; and she had to shape herself according to the likes and dislikes of their husbands.

The society of the Saṅgam age accepted the institution of extra-marital relationships of men with women other than their wives, called parattaiyar, and the men resorted to them at times. But the modest wives could not

take them to task. They could only pray that they should not be deserted by the men in their preference for the rival public women. Vaiyāvik Kōpperum Pēgan, famed as one of the seven rulers of principalities accustomed to benevolent charities and gifts to supplicants, deserted his wife and lived with a parattai. Five Tamil poets disapproved of his unworthy behaviour in gentle language saying that his resuming his life with his wife was regarded by them as the reward of their own poesy.[328]

They did not use strong language of condemnation like other poets such as Pisirāndaiyār and Kōvūr Kiḻār.The reason for the gentle disapproval cannot be the modern one of the preference to non-interference in other people's affairs. It was because they held the general notion of the society of the time that a woman was the property of the man she wedded and had no independent existence of her own.

A verse of the Kuṟuntogai says that the parents of a girl declared the right of a hero, who was resident of the sea coast area, over their daughter-heroine (meaning her becoming the wedded property of the man of the sea coast area). Poet Kapilar, praising the chief Malaiyamāṉ Tirumuḍikkāri, affirms that his wife's shoulders were his property and that he did not care for other wealth.[329]

The practice of the groom's party giving gifts to the bride's side obtained in the Saṅgam age; it is called" taḻaivilai" in a poem of the Aiṅkuṟu-nuṟu. In this verse the friend of the heroine tells her that the hero-lover gave the kingdom as "taḻaivilai". We read that the groom's party contracting a marriage alliance made rich gifts by articles and jewels to the bride's side.[330]

Wifely chastity (kaṟpu) was an adored ideal, and was invested with divinity as "kaḍavuḷ-kaṟpu"; with the help of this "godly chastity," a wife-heroine in Saṅgam poetry is said to have borne the wrong caused by her husband-hero's resort to keep other women.[331] Flower-selling women are mentioned in a verse and they might have pleased the rulers' courts with

their flowers.[332] It was considered wrong on the part of women to talk with strangers and that if they had to do so, they were expected to place some article between themselves and the stranger.[333]

Marriage

Though the Aham poetic tradition dwells on secret weddings by a youth and a maiden developing love at first sight for each other, we may say that actually most marriages took place with the consent of the parents. There were cases where the lovers wedded in secret; the bride had to abandon her house on account of the opposition of parents to the alliance; this "going out" for the purpose of escaping opposition was called "Uḍaṉ-pōkku" (going with the lover); the lovers, thus going out, reached the groom's house and led their joint household life with the formalization of their former secret wedding, called "kaḷavut tirumaṇam" (marriage of love begun in secrecy). We learn that, though this was a secret wedding, this was accepted by the society as a regular procedure.

As this secret wedding procedure became faulty by the intrusion of falsity and misbehaviour, the elders took to the conduct of a marriage in public, making it known to people with some formal ceremonies. This was called "kaṟput-tirumaṇam" (open, formal wedding). The word "kaṟpu" is from the root "kal" to learn, and it refers to the marriage ceremonially conducted or the wedding in which the bride's party gave her to the groom's side formally.[334] The author of the Tolkāppiyam refers to those conducting the ceremonies of marriage as "aiyar", a word not to be taken as Brāhmaṇs or Pārppaṉar, but as elders/ seniors who were esteemed in the society.[335] There is a description of the old ceremonial marriage marked by simplicity in two of the Ahanāṉūṟu verses.

An auspicious day was chosen for the marriage ceremony and the suitable muhūrtam (time of solemnization) was considered as morning when the star Rōhiṇi was in combination with the Moon. The marriage took place in the groom's house; its courtyard was spread with fresh sand

and adorned with garlands. Auspicious lamps were lit in the marrriage pavilion (pandal). The ceremony began with prayer, and the women called vadhuvai magaḷir (marriage conducting women) conducted it, wearing beautiful apparel and jewels. Married women stood in rows and passed on water they collected in freshly baked earthen pots to the vadhuvai magaḷir who bathed the bride with it. Then sound-instruments raised auspicious notes; four elderly mothers blessed the bride showering water with paddy grains and flowers on her head saying, "May you be a wife loved by your husband!" A marriage feast was held.

That night the elderly women, marked by the auspiciousness of their married status, conducted the nuptial ceremony of the married couple, blessing the bride: "May you become a great family-woman!"[336] The blessings by the elderly auspicious women instructing by implication the bride about the married life suggest to us the name of the ceremony as "kaṟpu" (that which is taught). In this wedding, the priest or the sacrificial fire has not been given a place, and there is no "tāli" (string around the neck as a token of married status). The practice of tying "tāli" in weddings was of later origin among the Tamil people. N. Subrahmanian says that this practice is not known to the Āryans and that they took it from the Tamil people.[337]

Widowhood

In the Indian social environment, the prime place went to the husband, and the lot of a woman having lost her husband was utterly miserable. Her life was subject to many miseries and various restrictions. Women, wishing to escape the cruelties imposed on widows, ascended the burning pyre with their dead husbands in acts called sati in North India. We cannot say for certain whether this custom prevailed in Tamil Nadu. But we have notices in the Saṅgam works of women who sacrificed themselves in the funeral fire, hating to live after the husband's death.

We read of wives who instantly gave up their lives on hearing of their

husband's deaths; such women were praised and wondered at. The Tolkāppiyam calls this sacrifice "mūdāṉandam".[338] Women who cried and sobbed at the loss of their husbands figure in the verse-situation called "mudu pālai".[339] Women who died throwing themselves into the fire with the death of their husband figure in the verse-situation of "mālai".[340] Women who lived the life of penance and renunciation after losing their husbands figure in the verse-situation of "tāpata-nilai".[341]

The height of a wife's chaste life was considered to be her instantaneous death on hearing of her husband's passing away. But verses celebrating such instantaneous deaths are not found in the Saṅgam texts. The sorrow-laden state of a woman who lost her husband is depicted in the Puṟanāṉūṟu, verse[254], extracted by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar in his Tolkāppiyarn exposition as a citation.[342]

When Ollaiyūr-tanda Būtappāṇḍliyaṉ died, his queen, Peruṅkōppeṇḍu determined to end her life by jumping into the cremation fire, and the poets tried to prevent her action. There is a verse in the Puṟanāṉūṟu referring to her refusal to accept their advice and telling them that fire and the lotus pond were one and the same for women jumping into the fire.[343] There is no evidence in the Saṅgam poems to the effect that unwilling women were forced to die with their husbands on the pyre.

The word "kaimmai" (widowhood) is based on the root "kai" indicating smallness as in the examples "kaikkuḍai" (hand-umbrella) and "kaikkuṭṭai" (little hand kerchief). The Tamil society regarded the life of a woman without her husband as a deficient one to be treated as unworthy and low. There were many restrictions on eating for widows in order to keep their sensual cravings under check. She was not allowed to eat all the three times a day and had to forego meals at fixed times. Ghee was banned totally from the rice food which had to be only an old one; sesame and tamarind batter were given as helping dishes. Boiled vēḷai greens were also given. She had to sleep on the bare floor eschewing bedspreads.

The tokens of her auspicious married state were all removed. Her bangles were broken; her head was shaven clean.[344]

These details gleaned from the Puranāṉūru show us the other side of the society of those days in which the widow was subjected to a life of repression so that her natural instincts did not assert themselves. Some women preferred death in the funeral pyre of their husbands rather than lead a life of such imposed misery; and this is conveyed by the Puranāṉūru verse cited earlier.

6. OCCUPATIONS

In the ancient period, the prime occupation engaging the people may be said to be cultivation of crops, and the occupation of weaving clothes came next. People were also engaged in trade; and commerce with outside lands promoted the prosperity of Tamil Nadu.

Agriculture

Cultivation of fields was the main occupation of people in the Marudam areas of plains watered by rivers in the Tamil country, called "meṉpularn" (soft cultivable land) as against "vaṉpularn" (hard uncultivable) Kuriñji (mountainous) and Mullai (jungle) areas. The land-areas watered by the Kāviri were ranked as particularly fertile, even though the areas through which Porunai, Vaiyai, and Teṉpeṇṇai flowed were also fertile. The Cōla land of the Kāveri river was so fertile as to yield food for seven elephants out of the space occupied by a single elephant lying down.[345] Paddy was the first preferred crop of the fields. The Cōla land is praised as yielding a thousand" Kalams" of produce in a field of the extent of a single Vēli.[346]

To improve agriculture, kings arranged to dig lakes, ponds, and wells. The Paṭṭiṉap-pālai states that Karikāl Peruvaḷḷattāṉ, the Cōla king, cleared forests and had ponds dug for improving agricultural activities.[347] From a Puranāṉūru verse by Kuḍapulaviyaṉār, we may infer that the Pāṇḍiyaṉ king also had lakes and ponds dug to step up agriculture in his kingdom.

This poet advises the king to build water-sources in all depressions of land surfaces and increase the resources of its prosperity.[348] There were lakes in all the cultivable areas of the Tamil country and watchmen looking after them regulated the distribution of water to fields as laid down. As already pointed out, there were arrangements to watch and safeguard tanks and ponds from breaching and flooding on account of excess rain water. Water flowed into fields in channels through sluices in water sources; [349] cultivation was also done with water drawn from ponds, tanks, and wells.[350]

Sugarcane was also planted in fields besides rice grain. Tilling of land was done with ploughs; trained bulls were also harnessed to do the tilling. Rice-plants were grown by directly sowing and by transplantation of seedlings reared in small patches. The fully grown rice-grain stalks were cut and the grain-clusters separated in vacant places called "pōrkkaḷam" near the fields. After the separation of their clusters of the grains, they were spread on straw in the same place and beaten further to isolate the grains, which were then sifted against the wind and heaped together on the threshing floor. The paddy thus got was measured and put in bags, and then taken to homes where they were stored in kudirs (earthen receptacles functioning as granaries).[351]

Non-rice grain crops like tiṉai, varahu, and cotton were grown in fields without water-resources. Two divisions among cultivators were recognized-those who tilled the land and those who caused others to till and ate out of the produce. The latter were the owners of the lands usually referred to as Kiḻārs; those who tilled and produced crops in their lands were known as uḻavar (tillers).

In times of failure of the rains, famines occurred with produce from land shrunk low. It has been stated earlier that in such famine conditions the king gave remissions of land revenue he collected. There were occasions of severe famine when the cultivator was pushed to sell even the seed-grains he had reserved for the next sowing to feed himself and

the dependents.[352] When a famine occurred in the Cōḻa land, one Siṟukuḍi Kiḻāṉ Paṇṇaṉ shared his own store of grains with the starving people; his act of benevolence was noble enough to receive the approbation of the Cōḻa king, Kiḷḷivaḷavaṉ.[353] There were thus good-intentioned people voluntarily helping the needy in periods of distress in those days.

Weaving

Weaving ranked next to tilling as the people's occupation. Cotton cultivated in the land was collected and beaten to separate the seeds from the fluffy matter out of which threads were spun.[354] Mostly, women who attended to this work in which they were engaged even during nights were widows.[355]

Major towns like Uṟaiyūr and Madurai were notable for their weaving business, and the Saṅgam texts mention the beauty and delicate texture of hand-woven cloths of that age. The cloths were so delicately woven that the fibres knit together in their structure were invisible to any looker-on. They were fine like snake-skin; silken robes were woven which were beautiful with protrusions (called koṭṭais). Cloths had artistic flower work woven on them; they were also dyed.[356] Weavers wove their cloths in long units, and cut the pieces they required out of them; this practice accounts for the name "aṟuvai" (cut parts) for cloths.

Men wore two garments-an upper and a lower one on their bodies;[357] stitched cloths do not seem to have been used by the people of the Saṅgam days. The Yavaṉas who hailed from Rome and worked as guards in royal palaces in Tamil Nadu wore jackets called meyppai (bag cover) covering their bodies; it was also called paḍam (cloth).[358] A cloth woven of silk-threads was called kaliṅgam; we learn that this was delicately soft like steam rising from milk; the ends of silken garments were beautified with knots.[359] The Paṭṭiṉap-pālai states that women in the houses of the rich wore silken cloths by day and changed them for cotton cloths by night.[360] These details indicate the flourishing condition of weaving business in the ancient Tamil Nadu.

TRADE

In addition to agriculture, trade forms the basis of a country's prosperity, and the Saṅgam texts speak of these in several contexts. We shall deal with these under two heads of inland and external trade.

Inland trade

Trade within the country took place by land routes. Goods were taken to places close to the sea-side on boats. We gather that inland trade was carried on mainly by barter; the produce of different places and the goods made (or manufactured by) by craftsmen were sold by exchange for other articles. People of cultivated fields exchanged paddy grains for salt from merchants dealing with salt, and the price of paddy was fixed in terms of the price of salt. Honey and roots of Kuṟiñji land products were exchanged for fish. Hunters exchanged the flesh of deer and drink (toddy) for sugarcane flakes (karumbu-avaḷ). Cow-herd women exchanged curd for paddy grains. The Pāṇar-singer gave Viṟali fish in exchange for a variety of white paddy. We may infer that the practice of selling food articles and vegetables in streets by peddlars shouting their sales, which was in vogue in those days, continues nowadays.[361]

Some products were sold at the places of their production. People went to salt fields and bought salt there; similarly fish were sold on the sea coast. Goods were transported to distant places by carts and by beasts of burden like donkeys. The pepper produced in mountain areas was carried on ponies for sale in other places. Major towns had trade meet and shops; in towns where kings lived, the shops functioned in mornings and evenings. Goods came for sale in the shops from places of their production. The Madurai shops sold a variety of goods, and flags were flown on them indicating the articles for sale they had.[362]

Merchants transporting their goods for sale in other places wer.: always in groups called "Sāttukaḷ" (guilds) to provide security against robbers on the ways they trod. Guards went along with them as a measure of safety,

and they seem to have been paid by the merchant guilds for their services. It has been stated earlier that the kings stationed watch- men to safeguard the routes travelled by merchants, levying excise duty on the goods they sold. As there are many references to plunderers on the roads in the Saṅgam poems, we cannot say that merchants were engaged in their activities fearlessly.[363]

External commerce with foreign countries

The Tamil land had sea-borne commerce with countries beyond the seas, exporting its products of textiles, conches, sandal, coral, pepper, and pearls to them. The accounts of foreign travellers about the sea-borne trade of the Tamil land surprisingly agree with the details about it mentioned in the Saṅgam works. Foreign traveller accounts of the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea (dated A.D. 70), Ptolemy (dated A.D. 140), Strabo, and Pliny give us many valuable particulars of the sea-borne trade of Rome with Tamil Nadu and about the sea ports of the latter region. These facts also receive confirmation from the ancient Roman coins and wine jar relics found in the archeological sites and river-beds at places like Arik Kamēḍu, Karuvūr, and Madurai.

Yavaṉas (from Rome) brought gold in their ships and exchanged it for pepper grown in Tamil Nadu.[364] Flags fluttered in the winds on their sailing ships; they unloaded goods needed by the Tamil people for their consumption.[365] Horses were imported by the Tamil Kings.[366] We learn that in Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṉam, the Cōḷa kingdom's port-town, the ships of foreign countries unloaded goods whose quantities were immeasurable. In the same mannner, the goods from inland areas were transported to the port for export.[367] The goods brought for export were kept safely in the port's store-yards; and export duty was levied on them. The king's officials who collected the levies worked day and night on their jobs. The export-import goods in the sea port were stamped with the Cōḷa king's tiger emblem. The bags of goods stored in the ports accumulated and formed

a heap, and the Paṭṭiṉap-pālai tells us that dogs and sheep climbed, jumped, and played on them.[368]

Goods unloaded in ports for transportation to other coastal areas were shipped in boats; salt which was for sale was carried in boats called "pahri". They sold salt and got paddy grains in exchange. They were kept in rows in the sea-port of Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṉam.[369] As ships were built of wood, they were called marakkalam (wooden ships); the boats used to unload goods from ships were called "tōṇi" (cargo boat).[370] The boats which were used for transporting travellers to and fro from ships were called "ambi", and these were rowed by fishermen. We get some details of the "ambi" boats in the Saṅgam literature.[371]

Mid-sea sailing ships were known as "nāvāy"; these with their sails stood in rows in the sea port of the Cōḻa capital town. Flags of countries to which the ships belonged fluttered from their masts. The port was so spacious and well-provided with facilities to allow ships to enter into it without folding their sails or reducing the goods they carried.[372] Like an elephant breaking the control of its mahout and running wild, a ship is said to have sailed fast leaving the waves of the sea it traversed.[373] Ships engaged in carrying goods in trade with foreign countries were known as "vaṅgam". Merchants who went and sold their goods in other countries came back by these vaṅgams and disembarked from them at the ports by night.[374] The Padiṟṟup-pattu speaks of vaṅgams going round, cleaving the sea waves, to various countries and engaging in commerce.[375] There are also other references to vaṅgam in the Saṅgam texts.[376] The word "kalam" for ships of Greek origin has also been used in them.[377]

There were ports in Tamil Nadu both in its eastern and western coasts. Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṉam in the eastern coast was a famous Cōḻa port, and it has been described in detail in the Paṭṭiṉap-pālai. Another port in the same coast was in Koṟkai belonging to the Pāṇḍiyas; it was famous for its export of pearls got from its pearl fisheries. Musiṟi in the western coast belonging to the Cēras was also a port of importance. We have other

ports too mentioned in the accounts of foreigners. There were light-houses for guiding ships on the seas. The Perumpāṉāṟṟup-paḍai speaks of a light-house situated in the port of Nīrppeyal-tuṟai in Toṇḍaināḍu, which is identified with Māmallapuram of later times.[378]

Trade within the country took place mostly by barter; it was conducted in terms of coins outside the country. Roman coins have been collected in excavations in Tamil Nadu. The Tamil monarchs also issued their own coins called "kāsu", small in size like a margosa tree's fruit and probably cast in solid gold. Women strung these coins into a garland and wore them.[379] Even coins of very small size got the name of "kāsu" by generalization. In the Cēra kingdom, gold coins called "kāṇam" were in circulation.[380]

The advanced level of trade and commerce prevailing in old Tamil Nadu will be clear from what has been said so far. With the sea bordering their land on its three sides, the Tamil people naturally were excellent seafarers. The Tolkāppiyam, which is the grammar of the culture of the Tamil people, has noted their trading activities involving journeys beyond their seas.[381]

7. BELIEFS

Each society has developed its own particular beliefs as it grows in an environment. These may be viewed as fallacious; yet they deserve special attention as inseparable cultural elements of the society concerned.

Belief in spirits (pēys)

The Tamil people believed in the existence of pēys (spirits) and were afraid of their activities. The spirits were believed to live in cremation grounds and trees, and they were offered food or other offerings under the belief that they would spare the propitiators withhout killing them.[382] Spirits and ghosts (pisāsugal), and also divinities inflicting suffering, were supposed to roam about by night in the streets of Madurai.[383] Female spirits eating corpses were joined by male ones; the braid of the female

spirit got disordered and blown by the wind.[384] Neem leaf and white mustard were believed to ward off spirits.

To protect children from evil influences and harm, their heads were smeared with ghee (clarified buttter) and white mustard.[385] The wives of husbands wounded in battles guarded them from spirits targeting and killing them. The Puṟanāṉūṟu describes how women worked to save fallen heroes from spirits.[386] They tied leaves of the iravu tree along with neem leaves and hung them in the front of the house; they scattered white mustard in the house, burnt inncense, and sounded yāḻ and other musical instruments. They sang the neydal paṇ and rang the small bell.

The evil causing eye (kaṇṇēṟu)

This word "kaṇṇēṟu" literally means "hitting by the eye" and refers to the belief that some people's eyes cause malefic effects to the persons they look on. Such popular beliefs are universal. This belief, though irrational, is still current, and it is called dṛṣṭi (bad glance); and the remedy for the damage of the evil eye is known as dṛṣṭi-parihāram. To protect children from the harming eye, houses were strewn with ghee and white mustard.[387] Women, while bathing, smeared oil and white mustard on their heads to safeguard themselves from the evil eyes of others;[388] ghee and white mustard were scattered all over the house;[389] and the upper frames of doorways were also smeared with these.[390]

Choice of auspicious time (nimittam)

The Tamil people of the Saṅgam period believed in the need to do things at auspicious times deemed favourable to their purposes. They looked to good omens before starting from their houses on any business; the appearances and flights of birds also deterrmined omens. The minstrels who were supplicants wished to approach a patron in favourable times indicated by good omens to get beneficial results.[391] If the patron did not favour them with gifts, they rued the inappropriate time when they met him rather than his insensitivity.[392]

Each work was commenced only after determining the favourable day and hour for it.[393] The nimittam, determined by the actions of birds, was called "puḷ-nimittam". The Tolkāppiyam mentions that the judgement of favourable times was made considering astrological aspect of the days and the activity of birds as well as (nature or action of) the cow.[394] We find that the chameleon also formed the basis of determining favourable times, and that this was taken as similar to bird omens.[395]

A chance hearing of an auspicious word called "viricci" on the occasion of entering or doing a work was held to be a good omen predicting and furthering favourable events. The word "unexpected" is spoken by somebody unconnected with the persons concerned and unaware of their state and is taken as an indication of the onset of the right time for any venture. In the Aham poetic tradition, when the heroine and her friends feel anxious about the returning of the hero (who has gone out on a mission), if she happens to hear words from a girl in the neighbouring house to the effect "He will come back now itself" made in the course of her talk, then it would be taken as a "viricci", i.e. favourable forecast.[396] We read of elderly women going to temples to hear such words of good omen; they would scatter mullai flowers with paddy-grains as their offering before the deity and stand awaiting the utterance of the good word.[397] It was considered a good omen if bracelets on the hands of women stick to them without slipping (as they did in days of separation from the lover).[398]

The lizard's twitter

Sounds made by lizards were taken as indications of the course of events in the future. A verse in the Naṟṟiṇai tells us that the friend of the heroine comforted her in her grief of separation from her lover-hero (who has gone out to earn money in another place) on the strength of the twittering sound of the lizard on the wall every time she thought of the absent hero; the likelihood of his coming back soon was practically certain.[399] In another verse, a wild pig is imagined to have escaped from

falling into a hunter's net after listening to the sounds made by a lizard as a caution.[400]

Sooth-saying (kuṟi)

Hearing predictions from sooth-sayers was the custom prevalent in the Saṅgam age. The sooth-saying woman, a resident of mountain-areas, was called" Kaṭṭuvicci" and Agavaṉmagaḷ (diviner or caller of the divine); in the Aham poetic tradition; she is consulted by the heroine's mother, who is worried about the health and the future of her daughter. She sings invoking her deity with a song, goes into a trance, and mentions the cause of the girl's agony. Alternatively, her sooth-saying is also simpler as she puts grains of paddy on a sieve. counts them, and foretells on the basis of the suggestions she attributes to the numbers.[401] We also read of the male diviners like the Vēlaṉ (lance-holder) who perform "possession-dances" called Veṟi, propitiating the deity, Murugaṉ.[402]

The crow' s cawing

A crow's caw was believed to be an omen indicating the coming of a guest to a house. A verse of the Kuṟuntogai refers to the speech of the heroine's friend feeling grateful for the cawing of the crow, which brought back the hero who went off on a job; even if she offered the crow, for its good prediction, rice mixed with ghee in seven vessels, this food would not be equal to the help it has rendered her. The poetess who has sung in praise of the crow is called the "singer of the crow" (Kākkai pāḍiṉiyār) among the authors of the Saṅgam works.[403]

In another verse of the Aiṅkuṟu-nuṟu, the mother of a heroine offers the crow rice food with flesh in a golden vessel, if it caws and brings back her daughter and her lover who have eloped together.[404] The practice of offering a morsel of the rice food to the crow was prevalent among the ancient Tamil people, even as it survives today. The custom of feeding crows on the days of remembrance of ancestors (like the new moon day) before eating, was also prevalent, probably under the impression that it pleased

the ancestors in one way or the other. The offering was called bali (ritual giving). The Saṅgam texts have several references to the offer of bali (food) to crows.[405]

Bad omens

Beliefs in bad omens prevailed in the old Tamil land, even as in good ones. The flight of the big bee (tumbi) in the midday, the lamp getting extinguished by night, and the hooting of the owl were considered bad omens.[406] It was also believed that the planets, stars, and burning meteors, seen moving in the sky caused good and bad effects.[407] Re emergence of an extinct tree, the appearance of the sun in many places, sounding of fearful cries by birds, falling of teeth on the ground, taking bath after anointing oil on the head and the body, and falling down of a weapon in upturned position from its place-if happenings like these were seen in dreams, they presaged bad effects according to the belief of the ancient Tamil people.[408]

8. CONCLUSION

It has been our effort in this paper to reconstruct the state of ancient Tamil kingdoms and their social set-up and functioning from the Saṅgam literature regarded as the most early record of the old Tamil people. Having regard to the thrust and the scope of the paper, only those aspects considered by this researcher to be very significant have been dealt with herein. The kingships of the Saṅgam age were not major ones though the three kings of the Tamil land were regarded as such. The lands they ruled over were, beyond doubt, small (in comparison with empires in the North) These smaller regions were ruled by hereditary kings with full regal authority, there being no institutional framework capable of checking or changing it. Though the king ruled with absolute power, it did not degenerate to despotism.

The king respected the principles of dharma, the unwritten laws maintaining society in the stable virtuous path. He bowed before the

dharmic principle that a king's duty was to protect his subjects like a mother lovingly guarding and rearing her children. He believed that the white parasol held above him (as a regal insignia) was an auspicious symbol reminding him of his responsibility to protect his people from sufferings. He understood that it was his duty to punish the wicked and to protect the good people, and he ruled, always sensitive to the needs of his subjects, realizing that they would blame him for any mishap befalling them.

The Tamil kings understood the need for a strong force to keep up peace in the land, and they shaped armies of might ensuring their defence; and the warriors from all parts of the kingdom were enlisted and given field-training. It was thought a duty for every young person to join in the war waged by his land. There is no evidence of the official existence of a group of ministers to assist the king. But there were mature elders around the kings whose counsel was heard with respect by them. There were arrangements for tax-collection; land tax was levied and it was emphasized that the proper collection procedure should be followed. In periods of drought, land tax was remitted.

There were courts of justice in the bigger towns. The kings were the heads, managing courts, even as they led their armies fighting as their head in battles. The king's direct rule was focussed around his capital town, and the outlying areas were self-governing. The Saṅgam kingship, lacking unified administration of a full extent of land, may be said to have been a precursor of the Polygar administration of decentralized units, which was forged under the Vijayanagar rulers of later times.

The Varṇāśrama-dharma organization obtained in the ancient Tamil society only as a superimposed theoretical frame, there being no fourfold division, except for Brāhmiṇs, among the people who hailed from tribal groups pursuing different occupations. They were cowherds, hunters, cultivators, highwaymen or fishermen according to the natural resources of the regions they lived in; they engaged in grazing cattle, hunting animals,

raising crops, robbing of wayfarers, and in catching and selling fish respectively, as their environment of Mullai, Kuriñji, Marudam, Pālai and Neydal provided for their livelihood. Eventhough they stuck to their separate occupations, they were not identifiable as castes.

The status of women remained second only to that of men in those days as it prevailed in most of the ancient societies. They were, not given all the rights of freedom due to them and several restrictions were put on their course of love-making. There were a number of popular beliefs among the people of the Saṅgam age.

The Saṅgam literature resembles a deep sea of treasures, and valuable pearls may be obtained from diving into it. Only inter disciplinary research involving studies of its literature integrating relevant aspects of psychology, economics, anthropology, history, and philosophical enquiry, can help to reveal its truthful glimpses to us.

NOTES

1. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, A History of South India, p. 110.

2. Ibid., p. 26

3. Ibid., p. 82

4. T. R. Burrow, Collected Papers On Dravidian Linguistics, pp. 158-59.

5. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit., p. 85.

6. PURAM, 168, 18: "vaiyaka varaippil Tami̱ḻaham"; PAR.T, 9.1: "taṉḏami̱ḻ-vēlit-Tami̱ḻ. nāṭṭahamellām."

7. (a) arasu: PURAM, 17:3, 35:5; 55:10; 73:3; 158:2; 183.7.

(b) arasar: PURAM, 154.4; AHAM, 338:2, KUR, 392.6; PAD, 43:8; KT,25:3.

(c) arasiyal: PAD, 89.12; MK, 191.

(d) arasavai: PAD, 85.9; PA, 55.

8. DED, 201.

9. Iṟai: TOL, 1205: 1, iṟaivaṉ: PUṚAM. 18:26; 48.5; 152:19; 316:4; PAT, 120.

10. (a) koṟṟam: TOL, 1013.4; 1017.1; AHAM, 199:21; PAD, 88:14; PURAM, 35:25; 55:10; MK.194.

(b) koṟṟava: PAD, 32:9; 55:2; used as vocative

(c) koṟṟavar: MK, 74.

11. (a) Kō: PURAM, 9:8; 17:40; 22:33, 67:11, 141:11, 147:9

(b) kōmagaḷ (queen, ruler's wife). NAR, 300: 1. The masculine form of this Kōmagaṉ is not found used in the Saṅgam poetical anthologies.

(c) kōn: PURAM, 34:16; 54:1; 374:15, MK, 74.

12. (a) mannan: PURAM, 65:10; 186:2; 299.1; 308:4; 319:12; 338:12; 353:11;

(b) mannar. AHAM, 54:1; 67:12; 77:17; 125:21; 188:4; 246:10; 346:24; PURAM, 26:14; 52:5; 54:9; 299:5.

13: (i) vēndu: TOL, 981:1; 1007:1; 1010:3; 8: 1139:1; 1584; AHAM, 104:1; KUR, 242:5; NAR, 43:9; PAD, 12:3.

(ii) vēndan: TOL, 956:2; 98l:l; 1010:12; 1012:1; 1017:2; 1020:1; 1022:3, 10; 1029:4; AHAM,24:18;PURAM, 11:7;NAR, 153:8;AKN,426:1.

(iii) vēndar: TOL, 1022:12; AHAM, 78:21; KUR, 380:1, NAR, 180:7.

14: TOL,952:3.

15. History of the Tamils from the Earliest to 600 A.D., p. 10.

16. Saṅgakāla Vāḻviyal, p. 46.

17. Tamiḻar Sālbu, pp. 43-44.

18. TOL, 1339:3.

19. PURAM, 35.4.

20. AHAM, 181: 6-7; PURAM, 14.19; 16.12; 23.4-5; 56.14; 120: 19-21; 125: 19-29.

21. PURAM,55:1-6.

22. Ibid., 58: 3-18.

23. Ibid., 42:22-25; 56:11; 362:7.

24. TOL, 1574: 1-4.

25. PURAM, 26: 5; 91: l; 131: 2.

26. TOL,1018:1.

27. Ibid., 1040:11.

28. PURAM,35:19-21.

29. Ibid., 31:1-4: "Just as according to the valued tradition, matters of wealth and enjoyment of pleasure accompany the pursuit of dharma (aṟam), the one parasol (of the king) rising high, the two others (of other kings) falling into the shade and shining afar, like the impressive moon."

30. Ibid., 6:17-18: "Let your royal umbrella bow down in veneration circumbulating sages and the temple of the three-eyed Lord Śiva."

31. TOL,1018:1.

32. Ibid., 1040:10.

33. PAD, 44:2.

34. PURAM,9:7.

35. TOL,1037:1.

36. PURAM, 50:1-6; 362.3; 369:4-5.

37. PAD, 30:30-44.

38. PURAM,50:1-16.

39. KT,99:14.

40. PAD, 8th decade padigam 4-6: murasum kuḍaiyum kalaṉum koṇḍu (seizing the drum and the parasol and the jewels of the defeated kings).

41. PURAM,305:6.

42. Ibid., 158:6-7: "The hero chief of fierce fighting Malaiyaṉ rode on Kāri and won in battle." SPA, 110-111: "The horse Ōri of the chief Ōri which fought with the horse Kāri of the chief Malayamāṉ Tirumuḍik Kāri."

43. AHAM,4:3-5.

44. TOL, 1010:4-5.

45. PURAM,45: 1-4.

46. PAD, 31: 30-31.

47. PURAM,99:5.

48. Ibid., 131:2 and 157: 6.13. The terms for the flowers are: vaḷaippū meaning surapuṉṉai flower, and kōḍal pū meaning kāndaḷ flower.

49. DED, 5532 "to cover (as a building) roof, thatch, put on (as a garland.)"

50. PAD, 38.4 with old commentary on. Kaḷaṅkāyk Kaṉṉi Nār muṭiccēral.

51. PAD, 14:11; 16:17; 40:13; 45:6.

52. PAD, 14.11.

53. N. Subrahmanian, op. cit., p. 88.

54. PAD, 79:12-14.

55. SP, Kolaikkaḷak-kādai : 131-136 and Vaḻakkurai-kādai : 21-23, 78-79.

56. PAT, 131-135.

57. Ibid., 40.

58. PURAM,174:10-18.

59. KUR,298:6.

60. AHAM, 97: 9-10; 152:4-5; 208:1-3.

61. Ibid., 208:1-3.

62. PURAM, 151:7-12; KUR, 292: 1-6.

63. N. Subrahmanian, op. cit., p. 105.

64. PAD, 44: 14-16.

65. PURAM, 36: 8-13.

66. Ibid., 57: 10-11.

67. PAD, 44:14-17.

68. PURAM, 162:1-7.

69. Ibid., 32: 7-10.

70. Ibid., 3: 1-5.

71. Ibid., 186: 1-4.

72. George Hart, The Poems of Ancient Tamil, p. 14.

73. KT, 94:35-36.

74. PURAM, 17:2; 73:3; 75:2; 99:7; 202:9; 213:11; NAR, 227:7; PAT, 227; PA, 132.

75. PAT, 227, PA, 132.

76. PURAM, 213: 1-24.

77. Ibid., 165, colophon. This states that the poet Peruntalaic-Cāttaṉār showed the usurper the sword that his deposed elder brother in the forest gave him, asking him to take away his head with it as he preferred this to sending away a poet without honouring him by gifts.

78. PAT, 221-227.

79. PURAM, 72, 77.

80. Ibid., 45.

81. Ibid., 80.

82. Ibid., 65, 217, 74. respectively.

83. (i)avai, PURAM, 83: 3.

(ii) Kōcar avaikkaḷam PURAM, 283.6.

(iii) Paḻaiyan Mōhūr avaiyakarm, MK, 508-509.

(iv) Cōḻa King's entry into an assembly of elders, PA:187-88.

84. MPK,39.

85. (i) nāḷavai, PURAM, 54.3;

(ii) nāṉmakiḻ irukkai, PURAM 29.5;

(iii) nānmakiḻ makiḻ, PURAM, 123:1.

86. MK, 19-20; 499; 510; MPK, 550-560.

87. PURAM, 184.

88. Ibid.,.18: 18-30.

89. Ibid., 35: 18-34.

90. Ibid., 46.

91. Ibid., 47.

92. PAD, 9th decade, padigam U.Vē. Saminatha Iyer's note. p.245.

93. Ibid., 9th decade padigam : 11 Meyyūr amaicciyan, Maiyūr kiḻān.

94. PPA,447.

95. KT,68: 1-2.

96. MK,499.

97. TOL,975.

98. PURAM, 284: 1-2.

99. Ibid., 95.

100. Ibid., 45-47.

101. TOL, 1008: 3.

102. DED,5533.

103. Tamil Lexicon, p. 611. Kaṉ māṟu āḍavar oḍukkam orri MK : 642

104. DED, 1022.

105. Tol.P, 61: 3; Iḷampūraṉar-urai, pp. 76-77.

106. PURAM, 47 with its colophon.

107. Ibid., 47

108. PAD-padigam to 7th decade, line :10, purōsu mayakki; paḍigam to 9th decade line : 12, purōsu mayakki; they are interpreted by U.Vē. Saminatha Ayyar as the said person/minister excelled in knowledge more than the Brahmin prohitar in the rituals of sacirficial activities. Also, PAD, Padigam to 3rd decade.

109. TOL.S. 57, Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar urai; TOL.S. 56, Sēṉāvaraiyar urai.

110. AHAM, 43.6. NV, 65, 11 l. MP,55-58.

111. MP, 55-58.

112. TK, 638.

113. TOL, 1040: 1-2.

114. MK,223.

115. KT, 94: 42-43.

116. PAD, 37:4; 43:20 Nakaivar, PURAM, 387:13 Nakaippulavāṉar "those who amuse the king."

117. MP,45-49.

118. PURAM, 24: 31-38; 56: 18-21; 367: 6-9; MK,779-782.

119. MP,59--66.

120. KUR, 87: 1, PURAM: 34-12; PAR, 18: 28, AHAM, 167: 7-20; PAT, 246-249.

121. TOL, 1008: 7.

122. PURAM, 37: 9; AHAM, 102: 12, KP, 249-250, NV, 31-35.

123. A HAM, 167: 7-20; 287: 3-9.

124. Ibid., 252: 11-13; AKN, 206: 2.

125. (i) Areas of grain growing (tiṉaippuṉam), AHAM, 2: 14; 22: 16; 162: 7; 31 l: 4; NAR, 98: 9; PURAM, 172: 6.

(ii) cultivated fields (vayalgaḷ) AHAM, 156: 3-5; NAR, 280: 7; AKN, 1:2; 2:2; 3:4; 4:4-5;

126. KUR, 12: 1-4; 16: 1-5.

127. PPA, 75-82.

128. PURAM, 102: 1-5.

129. MPK,392-93.

130. KT, 96: 22-24.

13 l. PAR.T., 7.

132. NV,72-100.

133. PAT, 142-145.

134. Ibid., 105-115.

135. Ibid., 78-83.

136. PPA, 405.

137. PURAM, 378: 5-6.

138. NV, 95-96.

139. PPA, 127-28; NV, 62-63; KT. 83: 1-2.

140. PPA,297-308.

141. PAT, 76.

142. PAD, 22: 13-14; NAR, 92: 5--6; 240: 7-8; AHAM, 155: 9; AKN, 304: 1-2.

143. TOL, 1006-1007.

144. Ibid., 1011-12.

145. Ibid., 1014: 10-15.

146. Ibid., 1018:1-2.

147. Ibid., 1019-20.

148. Ibid., 1023.

149. Ibid., 1012:1-2.

150. PURAM, 189: 1-2.

151. Ibid., 8: 1-3.

152. Ibid., 20: 13.

153. Ibid., 8: 3.

154. Ibid., 336-356; 109-111.

155. Ibid., 345: 7.

156. Ibid., 14:1-4, 61:15-17, 98:1-4.

157. Ibid., 273, 299, 302-304.

158. TIL. 1026: 4-6.

159. PURAM, 371, Citation of example by Iḷampūraṉar, under TOL.P, 75; Ibid., P.371, Citation of example by Naccinārkkiṉiyar, under TOL.P, 76.

160. PAD, 33, 51; PURAM, 7, 13, 15,16,17.

161. PURAM,284.

162. Ibid., 169: 9-12.

163. Ibid., 294: 3, "Kumarip paḍai"

164. Ibid., 312: 3.

165. Ibid., 95.

166. MP, 24-28; NV, 169-188.

167. PURAM, 279, 288, 306, 308, 312.

168. Ibid., 65.

169. Ibid., 312: 6.

170. Ibid., 277: 1-4; 278: 1-9; 295: 4-8.

171. Ibid., 24: 29. vāḷiṉ vāḻnar

172. Ibid., 122: 4-6; 125: 9-16; AHAM, 209: 12-15.

173. TOL, 1013: 5, Mā+RĀYAM, "great gift by the king."

174. PURAM, 285, 287, 297, 299.

175. Ibid., 7,16,31 (praise of plunder); 4. 7,41,98 (praise by folk song).

176. KT, 13: 1-2; PAD, 20; MK, 126,692; PURAM, 7, 15, 392.

177. PAD, Padigam of decade 5; PURAM, Colophons of poems 17 and 74; PAT, 246-249; NAR, 18: 2-3.

178. PURAM, 40; PAD, 43.

179. TOL,IOIO: 18, TOL.P. 60; commentary of Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, p. 145.

180. PURAM, 186: 2.

181. Ibid., 18.

182. AHAM, 252: 9-13.

183. PURAM, 184.

184. Ibid., 35, colophon.

185. Ibid., 260, 297, 379.

186. Ibid., 149.

187. Ibid., 22, 97, 156, 387

188. Ibid., 97: 18-20.

189. Ibid., 22: 26.

190. PAD, 17,59,66,71,80.

191. TK, 756 (Parimēl Aḻagar's commentary)

192. PPA,80-81.

193. PAT, 120-125.

194. KUR, 292:1-5.

195. PURAM, 75: 1-5.

196. Ibid., 35: 15; 39: 10; PPA, 443-444.

197. KT, 139

198. KUR, 276: 5-8.

199. NAR, 90: 8-12.

200. Ibid., 196: 9.

201. AHAM, 90: 1-8.

202. Paḻamoḻi Nāṉūṟu, 93.

203. AHAM, 93: 5; PURAM, 39: 8-9; NAR, 400: 7-8.

204. M K, 489-492.

205. PURAM,34: 1-3.

206. Ibid., 47 colophon.

207. Ibid., 46

208. KUR,292: 1-5.

209. AHAM, 256: 15-20.

210. Ibid., 262: 1-12.

211. PURAM, 35 colophon.

212. Ibid., 74 text and colophon.

213. Ibid., 17 colophon.

214. DED, 1655.

215. PAR, 15:10, Kula varai

216. TOL, 1545: 1; 1566.7 nīr vāḻ sāti; PPA 229:paṟavai sāti

217. TOL,970: 1-2.

218. The details about the regional descriptions are well-known.

219. M. Shanmukam Pillai, Saṅgat Tamiḻar Vāḻviyal. p. 101.

220. Ibid., p. 102.

221. Ibid., pp. 102-108; S. Vidyāṉandaṉ, Tamiḻar Sālbu, pp. 224-231.

222. TOL, 1573: 1-2; 1574: 1-4; 1580; 1583: 1-2.

223. PURAM, 183: 8-10.

224. Ibid., 335: 7-8.

225. K. C. Lakshmi Nārāyaṇaṉ, Aruntoṇḍu Āṟṟiya Tamiḻaga Andaṇargaḷ, 4; pp. 58-59.

226. TK, 30, Parimēl Aḻagar's commentary.

227. Naccinārkkiṉiyar's commentary on TMA, 96; MK, 477; KT, prefatory invocation.

228. KT, 9: 1-4.

229. MP, 37-40.

230. KUR, 156,277.

231. KT, 9; KUR, 277;AKN, 384, 387.

232. TOL, 1025: 5.

233. Ibid., 1104: 1, 1449: 2.

234. Ibid., 1456.1.

235. Iḷampūraṉar's commentary on TOL.P, 76.

236. Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's commentary on TOLP, 75.

237. (i) Pārppāṉ, TOL, 1143: 1, 1448: 1,1441: 3; AHAM, 24: 1,337: 7; KT, 65: 8,20; PAR, 5: 27; PURAM, 305: 2;MP, 37;

(ii) Pārppāṉar, TOL, 1227: 5,1456: I;AKN, 4: 2; PAR, 8: 52; PAR.T, 2: 59; PURAM, 34: 3, 43: 14,367: 4; PAD, 63: 1

238. Kāṭci: PURAM, 192: 9-11.

239. MP,37-38.

240. TOL,975. Ōtalum tūtum, "learning Vēdas and acting as messengers."

241. PURAM, 305: 1-6

242. AHAM, 337: 5-11.

243. PURAM, 34: 3-4.

244. PAD, 63: 1.

245. PURAM,43: 13-14.

246. Ibid., 367: 4-5.

247. PAR, 8: 52

248. AKN, 4: 2

249. PAR.T, 2: 57-63

250. PAR., 5: 26--27

251. AHAM, 24: 1-2

252. TOL,l448:1; 1449 :3

253. Ibid., 1127: 1-5; KUR, 156: 1-7.

254. KT,65.

255. PURAM, 6: 20.

256. Ibid., 43: 1-4.

257. PAT, 54-55.

258. TMA, 126--137.

259. PPA,493-499.

260. TOL, 1573: 1-2.

261. AKN, 202.

262. PURAM,367: 12; TMA. 182.

263. TMA, 183.

264. KUR, 156

265. TMA,179-180.

266. MK,655-656.

267. TMA, 180-185.

268. MK,468-474.

269. PURAM,367: 12-13; TMA, 181-182.

270. PURAM, 361: 4-5.

271. Ibid., 93: l.

272. Ibid., 397: 20; TMA, 177.

273. TMA,177, Naccinārkkiniyar's commentary on TMA.

274. TOL,975.

275. KUR,277: 1-3.

276. PPA,279-310.

277. NAR, 321: 3-5.

278. PURAM, 15,224; PAD, 21,64, 70.

279. PURAM, 99,122,384; AHAM, 13: 10-11.

280. PURAM, 166.

281. Ibid., 122,361,367; PAD, 64.

282. Ibid., 6; PAD, 63.

283. Ibid., 9: 1-5.

284. Ibid., 200: 13, 201: 7.

285. Ibid., 126: 11.

286. K.C. Lakshmi Nārāyanan, op. cit., p. 73.

287. N. Subrahmanian, op. cit., p. 73.

288. PAD, Padigams of 7th and 9th pattus.

289. Iṟayanār Ahapporuḷ, op.cit. p. 8.

290. N. Subrahmanian, op. cit., p. 336.

291. TOL, 1010: 17-18.

292. TOL, 1010: 17-18; TOL.P, 60, Naccinārkkiniyar's exposition. The explanation by Iḷampūraṇar does not fit in.

293. PURAM, 45: 5-7.

294. AHAM, 54: 1-2.

295. PURAM, 110, 112,200-202.

296. AHAM, 246: 8-14.

297. PURAM,19.

298. TOL.E, Pāyiram, Nacciṉarkkiṉiyar's, exposition.

299. PURAM, 201: 8-12.

300. TOL, 1580.

301. SPA, 55-62.

302. PURAM, 134: 1-2.

303. PAR.T, 1:22-25.

304. PAT, 205-212.

305. AHAM, 293: 7; KUR, 67: 4; PURAM, 353: 2.

306. PURAM, 378: 1; MK, 144.

307. PAT, 105-114.

308. TOL, 1583: 1-2.

309. (i) PURAM, 74: 4; PA, 75, citation of Vēḷaṉ.

(ii) KT, 101: 46 (citation of vēḷaṉmai).

310. PAR, 20: 63.

311. TOL.P, 6-2, Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's exposition.

312. SPA, 178-196.

313. TOL.P, 30, Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's exposition.

314. TOL, 929: 2, 1587: l.

315. PURAM, 82: 3, 287:1-2, 289:-10.

316. NAR,77: 1-2,347: 5-6; PURAM, 360: 16-21; KT, 55: 18,68: 19,85: 22.

317. AHAM,34: II-I2, 387: 4-8; KUR, 330: 1-4; NAR,90: 1-4; PURAM, 259: 1-6,311: 1-3; KT,72: 13-14, II7: 6-8.

318. TOL, 972: 1.

319. PURAM,67: II-12.

320. N. Subrahmanian, op. cit., p. 347.

321. TOL, 1048: 1-2.

322. Ibid., 1063: 1-2.

323. Ibid., 1070: 1.

324. Ibid., 984, 1125.

325. Ibid., 1058: 1-4.

326. KUR, 159. There are many examples of this situation of which only one is cited here as typical.

327. Ibid., 135: 1-2.

328. PURAM,143-147.

329. KUR, 351: 4-5; PURAM, 122: 8-10.

330. AKN, 147; AHAM, 280: 4-11.

331. KUR, 252.

332. PURAM,293.

333. Ibid., 85-86.

334. TOL, 1092, 1095.

335. Ibid., 1095: 2.

336. AHAM, 86. 136.

337. N. Subrahmanian, op. cit., p. 360.

338. TOL, 1029: 23.

339. Ibid., 1029: 24-25.

340. Ibid., 1029: 29.

341. Ibid., 1029: 29.

342. TOL.P, 79. Naccinārkkiniyar's exposition pp. 248-249.

343. PURAM, 246-247.

344. Ibid., 248, 250.

345. Ibid.,40: 10-11.

346. PA,246-248.

347. PAT, 283-284.

348. PURAM, 18: 27-30.

349. MPK,449. Punal poru pudavu, "sluice"

350. MK,89-93. nīrttevvu nirait toḻuvar... eṟṟattotu vaḷaṅkum akal āmpi...."uḻavar take water from water sources through ēṟṟam (lift) and āmpi (wide open bucket)."

351. M. Shanmukam Pillai, op.cit. pp. 57-59.

352. PURAM,230: 12-13.

353. Ibid., 173.

354. Ibid., 125: 1; 299: 1; 326: 5; NAR, 299:7.

355. NAR, 353: 1-2.

356. TMA, 15, 138; PA, 82-83, 154-155.

357. PURAM, 189: 5.

358. MP, 60, 65, 66; PURAM, 260:28, PPA:69.

359. PA, 82-83,155; PAD, 12: 21; PPA, 469.

360. PAT, 105-107.

361. N. Subrahmanian, op. cit., pp. 284-85.

362. Ibid., pp. 285-287.

363. Ibid., p. 288.

364. AHAM, 149: 7-11.

365. MK, 80-85.

366. Ibid., 321-324.

367. PAT, 126-133.

368. Ibid., 129-141.

369. Ibid., 28-32.

370. PURAM, 299:3; 343: 5-6.

371. Ibid., 381: 23-24; NAR, 74: 1-4; AKN, 98: 1-2; AHAM, 29: 15-18; 187: 18-23; KALI, 103:38; 106:24-25; PARI, 70-71.

372. PURAM,30: 10-14: PAT. 172-175

373. PURAM, 13: 5-8.

374. MK, 5: 536-542.

375. PAD, 52: 3-4.

376. AHAM, 255: I; NAR, 189.5; PURAM, 368: 9; 400: 20.

377. AKAM, 152: 7; PURAM, 338: 11; 386: 14.

378. PPA, 347-351.

379. KUR, 67: 4; 148: 3; 274: 2; NAR, 66.9; 274: 4. AKAM, 75:19; 293:7; 363:8

380. PAD, Padigams to 6th and 8th decades.

381. TOL,984.

382. PAD, 71: 23. Pali Koṇṭu peyarum pāsam pōla; pāsam "spirt"

384. PAT, 259-260.

385. PURAM. 296.

386. Ibid., 281.

387. TMA,228.

388. NAR, 40: 7-9.

389. Ibid., 370: 1-5.

390. NV, 86, MK, 354.

391. MPK,64-66.

392. PURAM,204: 10-12.

393. Ibid., 124: 1-3.

394. TOL,986:2; 1040: 17; 1127:3.

395. KUR, 140: 1-2.

396. NAR, 1-4; KURU. 218:1-3.

397. MP, 4-21; PURAM, 280: 6-7.

398. KUR, 260: 3; AKN, 218: 2.

399. NAR, 333: 9-12.

400. Ibid., 98: 1-7.

401. KUR, 23: 1-3; NAR, 288: 5-7; AHAM, 98: 7-10.

402. AKN, 245: 1-3; 245:1-4.

403. KUR,21O.

404. AKN,391.

405. NAR, 281: 1; 343: 5; PA, 181-184.

406. PURAM, 280: 2-5.

407. Ibid., 229.

408. Ibid. 11

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